

# **Political Branding in Botswana and Malawi: Electoral competition and the welfare agenda, 1994-2014**

By

**Samuel F. Hamer**  
HMRSAM001



A Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Political Studies

Faculty of the Humanities  
University of Cape Town  
20 July 2015

This work has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

Signature: Signature Removed

Date: 20 July 2015

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am deeply grateful to several individuals who have been instrumental in helping me to produce this work of scholarship. I am exceedingly grateful to Jeremy Seekings, Professor of Political Studies and Sociology, under whose auspices I have completed this thesis. The opportunity he has afforded me to study at the University of Cape Town has not only been an academically fulfilling experience, but one that has afforded me incredible geographical and intellectual exploration, enriching my life in ways that I never could have imagined. For such an opportunity I will always be grateful.

My gratitude extends to several colleagues at the Centre for Social Science Research whose insights have been invaluable to this outsider to Africa. Countless debates and discussions with them have shaped my worldview and contributed to my understanding of the region. Curious, congenial, eager to help—it has been a true privilege to learn alongside these deeply knowledgeable individuals.

Finally, I would thank my parents for inculcating in me a curiosity that has led me to explore the world. They have my utmost love and gratitude.

The research for this thesis and the thesis itself were made possible through the generous financial support of the Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town, and the Economic and Social Research Council.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Botswana.....	13
Chapter 3: Malawi.....	67
Chapter 4: Conclusion.....	128



## Abstract

Following the end of colonial rule in several southern African states, national leadership passed largely to neoliberal and patrimonial governments that proceeded to dominate the political landscape. Despite the widespread poverty that characterised much of post-colonial Africa, these governments did little to expand welfare spending beyond what colonial administrations had provided. Endemic poverty, however, has forced ruling-party governments to change tack as opposition parties in more recent years have emerged to challenge their leadership. In two such countries—Botswana and Malawi—heightened electoral competition has accompanied the efforts of presidential incumbents to demonstrate new public commitments to poverty reduction through shifts in rhetoric, symbolism, and policy emphasis. I argue that incumbents have pursued this “branding” with respect to poverty reduction in order to effectuate greater voter support for their incumbency and party.

The Botswana Democratic Party has ruled uninterrupted in Botswana since independence, but opposition parties have made significant inroads during recent elections. In the midst of this heightened political competition, President Ian Khama (2008- ) has sought to increase support for the party by remarketing the country’s employment-based programmes to serve new governmental objectives around employment and poverty reduction. Khama’s rebranding of public employment programmes (PEPs), especially the Ipelegeng Programme, has allowed government to target underserved beneficiary groups such as the urban poor, and provided more reliable incomes to out-of-work Botswana in rural areas. Critically, the rebranding of social protection programmes has resulted in their being publicly associated more with Khama himself than with government. Public displays of empathy for the conditions of the poor moreover, as manifested during Khama’s visits to disadvantaged areas, reinforced the president’s image as a poverty-sensitive leader. These programmatic and non-programmatic measures have together defined Khama’s social protection ‘brand’; or the public emphasis that the president has placed on his social protection agenda. For their part, opposition leaders have branded themselves around a “social-democratic” approach to poverty reduction. Since the 1990s, ruling and opposition parties have converged in their social protection ideologies as the BDP has “counterbranded” in response to electoral competition by adopting opposition policy ideas. Khama’s branding around personalised PEPs, in conclusion, generated strong support for himself among the rural poor especially owing to popular preferences for low-wage work over cash transfers. Analysis of Afrobarometer survey data shows that Khama’s branding was insufficient to maintain the BDP vote, as the party’s poor performance in the 2014 election confirmed.

Both Malawian presidents between 2004 and 2014, Bingu wa Mutharika and Joyce Banda, established new political parties while in office and opted to “brand” them as prioritising poverty reduction. These brands—which had programmatic, rhetorical, and symbolic components—allowed Mutharika and Banda the possibility of achieving a broader national appeal, whereas presidential elections before 2009 had been decided on the basis of regional patronage networks. Mutharika’s brand suggested how he would empower smallholder farmers to be able to ensure their own food security. Mutharika achieved this outcome in his first term and the voters overwhelmingly returned him to office. A collapsing economy in his second term, however, intensified national poverty. Banda’s brand was a response to this poverty and suggested how she would be committed to alleviating poverty for Malawi’s marginalised groups including women. Her “handout” programmes endeared her to some poor Malawians who had not benefitted from Mutharika-era growth. In the 2014 election, Banda failed to win re-election. No candidate’s political brand was sufficient to earn

the support of a majority of voters. Afrobarometer survey data reveal that in Malawi, voters tend to prioritise government action to address food shortages over action on poverty, explaining why Mutharika's efforts to combat food insecurity were more successful in 2009 than Banda's destitution-centred efforts in 2014.

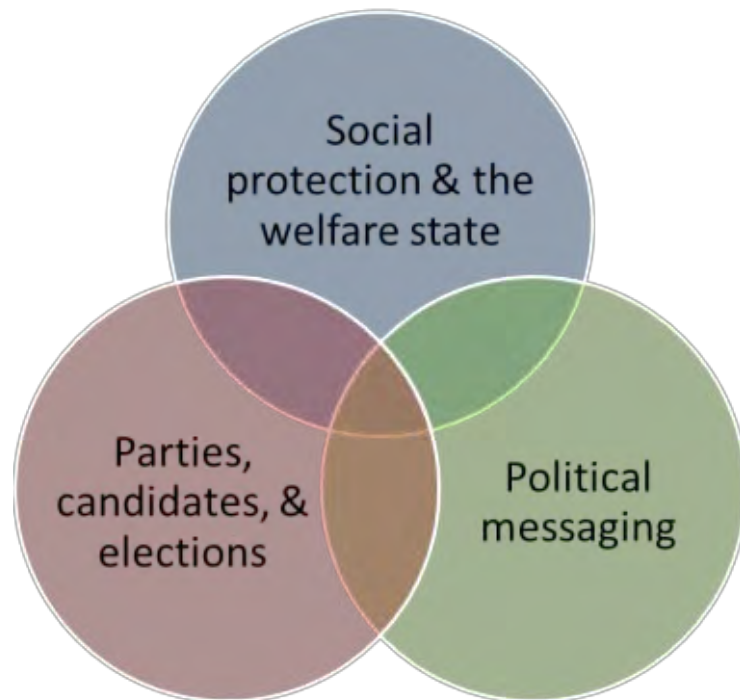
The findings in this thesis are critical for policymakers and political strategists in Africa for whom knowledge about the popularity of different welfare approaches has important implications for understanding what strategies will work politically. I suggest also how scholars might apply the branding analysis framework introduced in this study to other countries in the region. Though I conclude that the use of Afrobarometer survey data provides limited insight into general voting behaviour, I advocate for future research to pursue a more robust investigation into the characteristics and motivations of swing voters.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

---

### Motivation

Welfare-state building in Africa has been the subject of extensive study, but little attention has been given to the political dynamics that underpin how public programmes are crafted and implemented, or even how they get onto the policymaking agenda in the first place. Hickey (2007) remarked that despite a growing international interest with poverty reduction strategies, “little is known about the forms of politics that tend to underpin—and emerge from—such interventions.” In other words, how political elites shape the welfare agenda as a way to win support amidst changing political realities is still somewhat of a mystery. This thesis is dedicated therefore to exploring how political conditions have shaped the trajectory of social policy in two countries, Botswana and Malawi. By bringing greater awareness to the political variables that influence welfare state-building in these two places, this project can inform the tactical approach of development partners, national stakeholders, and scholarly observers who wish to better understand what development approaches work politically in sub-Saharan Africa and why.



### Theorising political branding

In attempting to identify what welfare state-building strategies work politically in a country context, there may be no better phenomenon to study than elections. Electoral campaigns offer a level of public discourse uncommon to other points in time, allowing observers to understand more readily how political candidates leverage their vision, beliefs, and ideas in accordance with what they believe can offer them the highest degree of electoral success. During election campaigns especially but at other times as well, political elites create a lens—one shaped by policy ideas, rhetoric, campaign tactics, and (for incumbents) public programmes—through which voters can understand the essence of what they would offer the electorate as leaders of government. When candidates distil their vision into that metaphorical lens, it can be said that they are reflecting a particular “political brand.” These brands, critically, do not exist in a vacuum but rather are reflections of circumstances external to the party including public opinion, social and economic conditions in the country, and the brands of other political parties. By analysing the nature of these brands and the political conditions

that prompt branding, it may be possible to glean important insights about the ways in which politics shapes the welfare agenda in a country. Ultimately, it may be the political brands that voters “purchase” that determine the government’s welfare agenda.

The application of marketing principles to the study of politics is reflected in a brief literature originating in Britain in the 1990s. Notable examples of this scholarship, which have been published predominantly in journals of marketing and management, include Gareth Smith’s examination of factors that influenced voters in the 2001 UK general election. Citing qualitative data from focus groups, Smith argued that the voters’ favourability of images that Labour, Conservative, and Liberal Democratic candidates and (by extension) their parties projected was more determinative of voting behaviour than voters’ views on the issues alone. While Smith’s study examined branding as the explicit project of Britain’s political elites, other works (including this one) document similar projects of “identity management,” although the studied elites themselves may not refer to it as such. Work by Catherine Needham, who in 2006 examined electioneering in the UK and US, described how “voters use brands in politics similarly to how consumers use brands in the marketplace: to reduce complexity in an environment of proliferating choice and information.” Rather than evaluate the broad legislative programmes of political competitors, she argued, voters are more likely to “respond to a small number of symbolic policies” that ultimately characterise the party or candidate as (being part of) a brand. In line with this finding, Reeves *et al.* (2006) argued that political parties in Britain are becoming less ideological and more “market-driven.” As a consequence, the authors noted, parties are constantly striving to “build their brands more effectively in a way which strikes the appropriate balance between the ideological [and] voter-driven strategies.”

Only in limited cases has the branding construct been applied to African politics, however. In an appraisal of the 2000 general election in Ghana, Mensah (2012) discussed how the challenger New Patriotic Party (NPP) compensated for their poor campaign resources base (relative to the incumbent) by managing candidates, party advertising, and policy positions in a coordinated manner in an appeal to “grassroots” voters in target regions of the country. With respect to the NPP’s policy aspect of its brand management, Mensah argued on the basis of key informant interviews that the party had, among other tactics, adopted a “poverty reduction” platform that diverged from their proposed “wealth creation”-oriented approach to governance. Despite these initial forays into investigations of branding in Africa, there is still much that has yet to be documented about the ways in which political competitors shape their brands in response to political competition.

The literature on branding suggests that one of two motivations underpin the decision of political actors to change their brands. One such motivation for altered branding is “the desire for greater ideological purity” (Snyder and Ting, 2002) in which political actors choose new branding that causes them to diverge in their rhetoric, symbolism, and policies from competitors. Political actors will diverge in their branding if the perceived costs of maintaining their existing branding are higher than the costs of arriving at a unique brand.<sup>1</sup> A practitioner of divergent branding might be a party wishing to distinguish itself in a field crowded with several similar competitors. Others likely to choose a divergent branding strategy could include a weak incumbent president not confident in the ability of her party to ensure re-election. Conversely, political actors might choose to shift their branding in a way that causes them and their opponents to become increasingly similar. “Convergent branding”

---

<sup>1</sup> The “cost” that political actors face is understood essentially as being the risk of losing the next election.



will occur when the party can reduce its electoral costs by adopting the qualities of other parties. One example might be a dominant party whose leadership feel threatened by rising electoral support for the opposition's. By implicitly claiming to the electorate that the ruling party can more expediently than the opposition achieve a particular policy end, these elites can potentially head off popular support for the challengers.

Political competitors in these ways follow a predictable progression of branding, "counter-branding," and ultimately political convergence. New entrants into the political playing field establish brands that allow for differentiation in a crowding marketplace ("divergent branding"). Any new branding may present incentives for extant competitors (and especially threatened incumbents) to "counter-brand" as a way of forestalling increased support for challengers ("convergent branding"). In due course—and assuming no further divergent branding—parties will march toward equilibrium, reaching what Reeves *et al.* called "convergence of the two main parties." As the parties converge in their branding, in turn producing successive election results with slim margins, there is thereafter a renewed incentive for competitors to forge new brands that would disrupt the equilibrium and begin the cycle anew.

### **Prospects for welfare branding in southern Africa**

This thesis brings branding analysis to two African contexts, Botswana and Malawi. These cases were initially selected for study in this dissertation as the result of a practical consideration: both countries held presidential elections in 2014 during my course of study. Spending several weeks in each country at these times allowed me the opportunity to attend campaign rallies, speak with candidates, and observe various other election phenomena that were only present during a limited window of time. These opportunities moreover maximised the possibilities for documentation of political branding practices.

However, the pragmatic decision to study these two countries does not obviate the value of analysing them in comparative profile. Botswana and Malawi share similar histories. Having both emerged from colonial rule in the mid-1960s with welfare regimes that were marginally developmental, early ruling parties largely carried forward the colonists' conservative social policy and made few adjustments to it over the subsequent three decades (Young, 1988). What accounted for the longevity of this social policy conservatism was likely a function of the fact that the respective ruling parties faced little or no electoral competition from opposition politicians who might have questioned their limited approach with regard to mitigating poverty and increasing the inclusivity of development.<sup>2</sup> As a consequence, these earlier government made few concessions on social policy until well into the latter part of the century.

I argue in this thesis that, in contrast with this earlier period in both countries, recent conditions of heightened electoral competition have prompted presidential incumbents to pursue political brands that they constructed through rhetorical, symbolic, and policy-based emphases with respect to poverty reduction. As I discuss, these brands ultimately served to foster different electoral ends though in each case of branding the objective was to engender greater support for themselves and their parties.

---

<sup>2</sup> The BDP had dominated elections prior to 1994, winning popular-vote majorities of no less than 64 percent. Malawi did not experience multipartisan elections between independence and 1994 under the one-party state of "Life President" Hastings Kamuzu Banda.

## Review of welfare states, Malawi and Botswana

A short review of the histories of welfare state administration in Malawi and Botswana demonstrates that despite multi-decade histories as independent states, both countries continue to suffer from widespread social vulnerability. Malawi's welfare state has been the source of much scholarship. The country's high incidence poverty can in large part be understood as an outcome of the British colonial administration, one that was "designed for control and exploitation of the colonised people to maintain the Empire," noted Kaunda (1995). The Nyasaland colony (as Malawi was then called) featured a structurally unbalanced economy in which roughly four-fifths of the indigenous people practiced subsistence farming while a small class of estate farmers generated much of the country's wealth through the cultivation and export of cash crops including tobacco, tea, and cotton. When an elite "middle class" of indigenous colonial civil servants inherited a newly independent Malawi in the mid-1960s, they "never sought to transform the structure of the political economy," Kaunda argued, because they "benefitted from existing economic order." The Malawi Congress Party (MCP), which had come under the control of President-for-Life Hastings Kamuzu Banda, fostered this highly elitist society of estate holders and peasants up until his departure from government in 1994.

Malawi has continued since the beginning of multi-party democracy to occupy a position as one of the poorest countries in the world, despite the longstanding efforts of global development partners to alleviate poverty there. The country's population of 16.4 million people (2013)—with 62 percent living on less than US\$1.25 per day—and small land area makes Malawi one of the densest populations with least wealth (in terms of GDP) countries in Africa (UNICEF, 2011). Chinsinga (2007) described social protection programmes after 1994 as being "dominated by government initiatives despite the mushrooming of NGOs offering social protection interventions ... focusing on vulnerability and transient poverty." In practice, direct welfare transfers (humanitarian assistance and school feeding programmes) and productivity-enhancing safety nets (public works programmes and agricultural subsidies) largely funded by donors have comprised the bulk of Malawi's social protection infrastructure. However, as Devereux *et al.* (2006) noted in spite of these "many different programmes and policies ... evidence that vulnerability is rising rather than falling suggests that these interventions are not adding up."

Botswana's welfare state development proceeded too from a largely neglectful colonial administration, though the country has since achieved a far higher average standard of living. Danevad (1993) described Botswana at independence as featuring an "exceptionally low level of development" with the virtual absence of an industrial sector or educated citizens, and an economy based largely on cattle-rearing. But synched with the emergence of the post-colonial state under the leadership of the agrarianist Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) was the discovery of diamond deposits. The first BDP government negotiated a 50-percent stake with the De Beers Company in the profits from the mining of its minerals, and thereafter funnelled revenues into extensive development projects in infrastructure, education, and healthcare (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2001). As a result, Botswana during the 1970s and 1980s featured an unparalleled rate of development as GDP grew at an average rate of 9 percent per year.

Despite this rapid economic growth, the BDP has historically pursued a social policy conservatism that has featured far less public expenditure dedicated to social programmes

than, for instance, its rapidly developing peer Mauritius (Ulriksen, 2011; 2012). Early governments offered a highly limited welfare state, but extended periods of drought in the 1970s and 1980s forced the government to provision a new welfare strategy that furnished relief in the form of food aid and cash transfers (Munemo, 2012). However, this “duty to prevent famine was closer to an administrative ethic ... and there was never an intention to nurture a corresponding right to relief,” de Waal (1997) noted. Moreover, benefits were offered at little more than subsistence levels. It was perhaps for this reason that Bar-On (2001) described the Botswanan state as “failing many of the very poor completely, [with] those who do benefit from it ... receiving steadily less of the nation’s increasing prosperity.” Others have pointed to the fact that since the 1990s, the government has introduced implementing “an unusually comprehensive set of social welfare programmes for its poor and vulnerable citizens” (Garcia and Moore, 2012). Further additions to the welfare state since the 1990s have, for instance, included an Orphan Care Programme and an Old-Age Pension. Indeed, this characterisation of Botswana’s welfare state as being both parsimonious and comprehensive is not a contradiction in terms. Rather, as Seekings (2014) argued, Botswana’s “welfare regime is the African equivalent of the Christian democratic regimes across much of Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.”

### **Political parties and presidentialism**

Having briefly reviewed the history of social welfare administration, it becomes necessary to ascertain political trends in the two countries. The previous two decades in Malawi and Botswana have featured distinctively higher levels of electoral competition than what had theretofore existed. In both countries, opposition parties have emerged against the backdrop of developmentally conservative welfare regimes. Political branding is poised therefore to feature branding around promises of alleviating poverty and increasing economic inclusivity. Greater insight into how political brands emerge, therefore, must incorporate an understanding of who is principally responsible for brand development.

The literature on southern Africa suggests that presidential candidates stand head-and-shoulders above other party elites in determining the party’s political and policy agendas. In this regard, van de Walle (2003) discussed how in African political elections “the main drama is about control of the presidency” and that “legislative elections are a sideshow.” In Malawi, Chikaya-Banda (2012) penned how “the primary source of new laws and policy in Malawi has always been the executive.” Even though members of parliament have the ability to introduce new legislation, virtually no policy actions have been initiated in the National Assembly there. Mpesi (2011) argued that the political party in Malawi is essentially an extension of the president’s beliefs and will. Losing the presidency in Malawi, he argues, is akin to losing all national political control, even if the ruling party fails to control a majority of seats in parliament, as has been the case for most of Malawi’s recent political history

Botswana’s parliamentary system, though different from Malawi’s presidential system, features a president who is not directly elected by the voters but nonetheless determines the political and policy agendas of the party. Good and Taylor (2008) noted how the president’s pre-eminence is reflected in the popular notion that he (or hypothetically she) is the *Tautona* [Great Lion], “an autocrat who decided almost everything alone, something that remains to this day.” Parliamentary elections, by comparison, are only significant insofar as they collectively determine which party and president will rule (Serema, 2000). Opposition parties have also had a history of personalisation around the party’s president. Molomo (2000) cited a Botswana National Front (BNF) party official who described his party and its

figurehead as “*Party ke Koma*” (“Koma is the party”), affirming that the party brand centred its messaging on the personage of party president Kenneth Koma. In both the Malawian and Botswanan cases, the fact that the president is the face and voice of the party as a whole indicates that greater focus should be given to the role of the president in determining the party’s electioneering strategy and the development of its political brand.

### **The role of opposition parties**

As I demonstrate in this thesis, opposition parties play a critical role in engendering an evolution of political brands. Yet political branding occurs not solely under conditions of electoral competition. In both Botswana and Malawi, the ruling parties during the first three decades following independence developed clear political brands. Parson (1975) noted how the BDP publicly placed value on traditional rural livelihoods and portrayed themselves as the stewards of Botswana’s burgeoning development. Even in Malawi, where opposition parties were illegal until 1993, Banda vouched for the preservation of indigenous institutions (e.g. tribal judicial systems) in an appeal to the anti-colonialist fervour that abounded in the country during its early years as a republic (Forster, 2001). This idea of the MCP as national liberators from the grasp of the colonists has continued to characterise the party’s election campaigns (Nzunda and Ross, 1995).

Opposition parties in recent years have provided a more prominent voice in Botswanan politics, despite having failed to supplant the BDP in national leadership in any of the country’s ten elections (Lotshwao, 2011). Yet these shortcomings have not negated the role of the opposition parties to influence policymaking or the political process. Selolwane (2002) described how the ruling party’s “monopoly of the electoral mandate has been slipping ... setting Botswana firmly on the road to plural politics.” He pointed to the efforts of the leading opposition party Botswana National Front (BNF) in opposing the BDP “not so much as a potential government-in-waiting, but as a ‘front’ for a wide-ranging set of grievances.” These grievances took such forms as advocacy for a reduction in the voting age from 21 to 18 and the introduction of non-contributory pensions for the elderly, both of which were then adopted by government after elective support for the opposition increased in 1994. Indeed, as Molomo (2000) argued, opposition parties have “played a more constructive role in shaping the democratic process than has commonly been recognised.”

Malawians in 1994 experienced a radical transition from autocracy to a highly competitive multi-party system. Rakner *et al.* (2007), appraising the first three national elections, argued that support for the three major political parties (MCP, UDF, and AFORD) was more a function of regional support bases than about differences in policy. While not necessarily contradicting this statement, van Donge (1995) argued that viewing political parties and elites as “merely regional phenomena ... would overlook their attempts to portray themselves as [being] of much wider significance.” Indeed, Svasand (2013) argued for how “there are indications that the incumbent party does present a different policy programme from that of the major opposition parties,” though this variation was not in all cases the major explanation for electoral outcomes. In any case, there has been ample contestation of the presidential agenda from opposition members in parliament, who in all but four years (2009-2012) have collectively prevented a majority caucus affiliated with the president’s party from forming.

## Ethno-regional politics and the salience of branding

There is a case to be made that political organisations market their vision for governance in a manner akin to marketplace firms, but what is less certain is under what conditions branding matters in determining voter behaviour. Indeed, voter choice is the outcome of a complex and ill-defined set of variables with no election resting on issues or incumbent performance alone. Perceptions around the integrity of candidates, the personalities of party leaders, and factors of identity have all played influential roles in deciding election outcomes. In order to better understand the potential for political branding to influence election outcomes and ultimately the national welfare agenda, it therefore becomes necessary to understand what factors—issues of governance or otherwise—are most salient to voters in an election. Other variables that could conflate shifts in branding with particular election outcomes must therefore be taken into consideration.

In Malawi, ethnicity and regional identity have historically played instrumental roles in determining elections, though perhaps to a lesser extent during the past decade. The country's colonial legacy left ethnic power bases in the Northern (Tumbuka), Central (Chewa), and Southern (Yao) regions. Osei-Hwedie (1998) discussed how following colonisation President Banda's systematic elevation of his fellow Chewa tribesmen in Malawi's social and economic order further balkanised the country. When multi-party politics emerged in the 1990s, localised patronage networks based on "super ethnic" regional identity ensured that the "origin of the leadership of a party and its regional base of support became very important to winning elections." In characterising the first three national elections following the 1993 referendum approving multi-party democracy, Chinsinga (2012) remarked on how "regional, ethnic and tribal patterns of voting ... seemed so entrenched." Yet the role that ethnic voting has occupied in determining Malawi's (and Botswana's) election outcomes has fallen in recent years, according to the work of Cheeseman and Ford (2007). These authors found that Malawians, among of ten Afrobarometer-surveyed nations, were the most ethnically polarised in terms of their voting behaviour; by 2003, they were third-most, and by 2006, sixth-most. Decreases in traditional determinants of voter behaviour have paralleled increases in newer voting rationale. Bratton *et al.* (2012) observed from survey data that "rational calculations about material welfare are apparently at the forefront of voters' minds" (see also Brazys *et al.*, 2015). These results suggest a growing utility for branding analysis in Malawi.

Voter loyalties on the basis of ethnicity or region have occupied a less prominent role in Botswana as the country's relatively high rate of ethnic homogeneity has ensured that patronage networks based on ethnic identity do not generally influence national politics. Though many rural voters in the early period supported first president Seretse Khama because of his status as a paramount chief of the populous Bamangwato clan, Charlton (1993) noted, tribal motivations were no longer of principal importance to most voters in later elections. As Danevad (1995) argued, the three-time election of successor Ketumile Masire—who was not a chief—indicated how the voters had come to select this president instead on the basis of "legal-rational principles ... that were grounded in the concept of elected representative parliamentary government." Nor did the opposition BNF define itself along ethnic lines but was rather "an alliance ... of intellectuals, trade unionists and chiefs" that emerged largely to represent the burgeoning middle class in Botswana's cities (Charlton). Though the country's various non-Tswana minority groups generally vote *en masse* for opposition parties, as Resnick (2013) noted, this is likely more an outcome of the fact that

these ethnic voters are centred in urban parts of the country, which have historically served as strongholds of opposition support.

## **Research methodology and structure of the thesis**

This thesis offers a largely qualitative analysis of the role of political discourse and elections that underpin the evolution of the welfare state in Malawi and Botswana. In addition to a review of the secondary literature, three types of primary sources informed my analysis. First, interviews with key informants including policymakers, party officials, academics, civil society representatives, and development partner personnel contributed to my general knowledge of electioneering and the evolution of the welfare state and its administration in these country contexts. Interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner with questions serving to elucidate the political motivations for state welfare expansion, and how political elites might work to further (or curtail) this expansion based on electoral competition and outcomes.

Second, my research relies on analysis of election manifestos with a focus on all parties' manifestos from the past five elections in each country. The decision to analyse election manifestos stemmed from a recognition that such documents provide an important (and in some cases lone) primary-source insight into political branding. While it is true that there are few ordinary citizens who read manifestos and political elites rarely refer to them in public forums (Chunga, 2014), manifestos nonetheless serve as “political products showcasing [parties'] policies and programs and how they plan to deal with national priorities in the political market” (Ayee, 2011). The relative emphasis of issues in manifestos over time can therefore provide important information about the brand that the political party or individual intends to project. In short, manifestos are the “trademark” of the political organisation.

Having examined the evidence for political branding in each country, I thirdly turn to public opinion data from Afrobarometer surveys recorded in Botswana and Malawi to infer insights about the prospects for candidates to leverage their branding for electoral success. My analysis was based on the assumption that election issues are most likely to be salient to voters if incumbents address or fail to address the issues that a plurality (or majority) of voters believe that government should prioritise.<sup>3</sup> If candidates can successfully address issues that matter to voters, they will be more likely to earn the approbation of prospective voters. These analyses identify those issues.

This thesis proceeds from this introduction in three parts. Chapter 2 explores how welfare policy has changed under Botswana's president Ian Khama. With the BDP having yet to recover from its electoral setback in 1994 when opposition parties won for the first time more than 40 percent of the popular vote, the president entered office in 2008 with a mandate to revive electoral support for the party. While scholars have identified Khama's famous name—his father was the country's legendary first president—as the party elites' purpose in bringing the new president into government, Khama himself would not rest on these laurels, instead launching a portfolio of public employment programmes (PEPs) that have targeted the able-bodied poor. Though these programmes are consistent with BDP philosophy and structurally mirror former government programmes tied to drought conditions, they have

---

<sup>3</sup> The analysis was not performed with respect to challengers. If it were, one would need to evaluate the perceptions that voters have for how these challengers would address issues.

been marketed as quintessential elements of President Khama's poverty eradication agenda. The emphasis that the president and government have placed on these PEPs suggests how the president has pursued poverty alleviation as the central pillar of his political brand. The chapter closes with an analysis of public opinion from the Afrobarometer survey project that attempts to discern the prospects for the success of Khama's branding effort.

Chapter 3 presents an analysis of branding in Malawi during the most recent two elections in 2009 and 2014. The balkanisation of the country along ethno-regional lines during the early period engendered a multiparty system in which candidates with extensive regional patronage networks competed for power. The first three presidential elections were closely contested, though they each produced predictable victories for the United Democratic Front (UDF) which represented the populous Southern region. A quarrel for control of the party shortly after the 2004 election, however, prompted the new incumbent Bingu wa Mutharika to found the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). No longer encumbered by intraparty competition but lacking the patronage networks that had historically determined election outcomes, Mutharika developed a partisan identity that could engender pan-regional support. To increase support for his party, Mutharika crafted a political brand centred on food production in part by offering input subsidies to smallholder farmers. When Mutharika died in 2012, his deputy Joyce Banda became president. Even before his death however, Banda had initiated her own presidential branding around poverty alleviation for marginalised demographic groups. Once she became president, Banda undoubtedly believed that new programmes targeting the poor and her own life career history as a "pro-poor" advocate would bolster her candidacy in 2014. An analysis of public opinion data presented at the end of the chapter evaluates the salience of political brands in Malawi.

Finally, Chapter 4 concludes with an analysis of the cases using the branding framework offered in this introduction. It discusses potential applications of branding analysis to other geographic contexts in the region in addition to suggesting how it might inform the work of policy and political professionals. Limitations of the study are also discussed in response to which further research pathways are proposed.

## Works cited

- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon H. Johnson, and James A. Robinson. "An African Success Story: Botswana." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2001. doi:10.2139/ssrn.290791.
- Ayee, Joseph RA. "Manifestos and Elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 18, no. 3 (2011): 367–84.
- Bar-On, Arnon. "Providing So Little for So Few: Botswana's Social Assistance Scheme'." *Wilson, F. et Al*, 2001, 246–68.
- Charlton, Roger. "The Politics of Elections in Botswana." *Africa* 63, no. 03 (1993): 330–70.
- Chikaya-Banda, Janet. "Duty of Care: Constitutional and Law Reform, in Malawi." *Africa Research Institute*, Policy Voices, September 2012.
- Chinsinga, Blessings. "Social Protection Policy in Malawi: Processes, Politics and Challenges." *Future Agricultures*, 2007.  
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.386.9204&rep=rep1&type=>

pdf.

- . “The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy Processes in Malawi: A Case Study of the Fertilizer Subsidy Programme,” 2012.  
<http://mobile.opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/2249>.
- Chunga, Joseph J. “Examining the Relevance of Political Parties in Malawi,” 2014.  
[http://afrobarometer.org/files/documents/briefing\\_papers/afrobrieftno125.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/files/documents/briefing_papers/afrobrieftno125.pdf).
- Danevad, Andreas. “Responsiveness in Botswana Politics: Do Elections Matter?” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, no. 03 (1995): 381–402.
- Devereux, Stephen, Bob Baulch, Ian Macauslan, Alexander Phiri, and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler. “Vulnerability and Social Protection in Malawi,” 2006.  
<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/5244>.
- Ferree, Karen, and Jeremy Horowitz. “Ties That Bind? The Rise and Decline of Ethno-Regional Partisanship in Malawi, 1994–2009.” *Democratization* 17, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 534–63. doi:10.1080/13510341003700394.
- Forster, Peter. “Law and Society under a Democratic Dictatorship: Dr. Banda and Malawi.” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 36, no. 3 (August 1, 2001): 275–93.  
doi:10.1163/156852101753289610.
- Garcia, Marito, and Charity MT Moore. *The Cash Dividend: The Rise of Cash Transfer Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa*. World Bank Publications, 2012.  
[http://books.google.co.za/books?hl=en&lr=&id=EZowsNe9jEcC&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=malawi+cash+transfer&ots=b1\\_MXMjtC5&sig=ZAmW5f7D4xYon9mL7JHC6ruR9xI](http://books.google.co.za/books?hl=en&lr=&id=EZowsNe9jEcC&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=malawi+cash+transfer&ots=b1_MXMjtC5&sig=ZAmW5f7D4xYon9mL7JHC6ruR9xI).
- Good, Kenneth, and Ian Taylor. “Botswana: A Minimalist Democracy.” *Democratization* 15, no. 4 (July 21, 2008): 750–65. doi:10.1080/13510340802191086.
- Hickey, Sam. “Conceptualising the Politics of Social Protection in Africa.” *Brooks World Poverty Institute Working Paper*, no. 04 (2007).  
[http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1204542](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1204542).
- Kaunda, Jonathan Mayuyuka. “Malawi: The Post-Colonial State, Development, and Democracy.” *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi E Documentazione dell’Istituto Italiano per l’Africa E l’Oriente* 50, no. 3 (September 1, 1995): 305–24.
- Lotshwao, Kebapetse. “The Weakness of Opposition Parties in Botswana: A Justification for More Internal-Party Democracy in the Dominant Botswana Democratic Party (BDP).” *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 5, no. 2 (2011): 103–11.
- Mensah, Albert Kobby. “Political Brand Management: Forms and Strategies in Modern Party Politics.” Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2012. <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/2276/>.
- Molomo, Mpho G. “Understanding Government and Opposition Parties in Botswana.”



- Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 65–92.  
doi:10.1080/14662040008447810.
- Munemo, Ngonidzashe. *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*. Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2012.
- Mpesi, Andrew Mabvuto. “Political Parties and Their Manifestos: Inferring Party Policy Positions in Malawi since 1994.” *Forum for Development Studies* 38, no. 1 (2011): 25–41. doi:10.1080/08039410.2011.560182.
- Needham, Catherine. “Brands and Political Loyalty.” *The Journal of Brand Management* 13, no. 3 (2006): 178–87.
- Nzunda, Matembo S., and Kenneth R. Ross. *Church, Law, and Political Transition in Malawi, 1992-1994*. 1. Intl Scholars Pubns, 1995.
- Osei-Hwedie, Bertha. “The Role of Ethnicity in Multi-Party Politics in Malawi and Zambia.” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 16, no. 2 (1998): 227–47.
- Parson, Jack. “A Note on the 1974 General Election in Botswana and the UBLS Election Study.” *Botswana Notes and Records* 7 (January 1, 1975): 73–80.
- Reeves, Peter, Leslie de Chernatony, and Marylyn Carrigan. “Building a Political Brand: Ideology or Voter-Driven Strategy.” *The Journal of Brand Management* 13, no. 6 (2006): 418–28.
- Resnick, Danielle. *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.  
<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ITRaAQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR15&dq=urban+poverty+and+party+populism+in+african&ots=MzzbXebbtX&sig=mzTc-lSyYBrYELP5OslYqe0t-9k>.
- Seekings, Jeremy. “Welfare Reform and the Conservative Social Contract: Botswana under Botswana Democratic Party Governments, 1994-2010.” Unpublished, October 2014.
- Selolwane, Onalenna. “From National to People’s Poverty in Changing Policy Regimes.” *Poverty Reduction and Changing Policy Regimes in Botswana*, 2012, 1.
- Serema, Batlang. “Information and Institutions: The Relationship between the Executive and Legislature in Botswana.” *Canadian Association for Information Science*, 2000.  
[http://www.caais-acsi.ca/proceedings/2000/serema\\_2000.pdf](http://www.caais-acsi.ca/proceedings/2000/serema_2000.pdf).
- Smith, Gareth, and Alan French. “The Political Brand: A Consumer Perspective.” *Marketing Theory* 9, no. 2 (2009): 209–26.
- Snyder, James M., Jr., and Michael M. Ting. “An Informational Rationale for Political Parties.” *American Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 90–110.  
doi:10.2307/3088416.
- Svasand, Lars. “The Concept of Opposition and the Structure of Opposition in Malawi.”

*Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 51, no. 3 (2013): 306–25.

Ulriksen, Marianne S. “Social Policy Development and Global Financial Crisis in the Open Economies of Botswana and Mauritius.” *Global Social Policy* 11, no. 2–3 (2011): 194–213.

———. “Welfare Policy Expansion in Botswana and Mauritius Explaining the Causes of Different Welfare Regime Paths.” *Comparative Political Studies* 45, no. 12 (2012): 1483–1509.

van de Walle, Nicolas. “Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa’s Emerging Party Systems.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 02 (June 2003): 297–321. doi:10.1017/S0022278X03004269.

van Donge, Jan Kees. “Kamuzu’s Legacy: The Democratization of Malawi: Or Searching for the Rules of the Game in African Politics.” *African Affairs*, 1995, 227–57.

Young, Crawford. “The African Colonial State and Its Political Legacy.” *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*, 1988, 25–66.

## Chapter 2: Botswana

---

### **“Our Father’s Programmes”: Political branding and the social protection agenda in Botswana, 2008-2014**

P9.20 = \$1.00

By 2008, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) had managed a feat matched by few other parties in any democratic political system: eight straight electoral victories. These electoral achievements were due in no small part to the ruling party’s stewardship of the country, which has featured an impressive record of development and economic growth. While the BDP had during the leadership of first president Seretse Khama (1967-1980) received the support of roughly three-quarters of the electorate, however, the popular vote percentage won by the BDP waned thereafter. Botswana’s first-past-the-post electoral system continued to afford the BDP a massive majority in the National Assembly, but its share of the vote declined to 55 percent in 1994. The 1994 election also gave the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF) a significant voice in parliament, as the party won 13 out of 40 elected positions. Since 1994, elections in Botswana have continued to be characterised by this heightened political competition.

The 1994 election forced the BDP to reflect on how the BDP could continue its stay in government. One way in which these party elites responded to the BDP’s decline in electoral support was to reconsider its leadership strategy. With comfortable wins through Botswana’s first five elections, the party had over time shifted its priorities away from politicking and toward a more administratively efficient (if not politically expedient) style of governance. This shift manifested itself in the selection of “an educated, mostly expatriate bureaucratic and technocratic elite” who were best prepared to advance the country’s development goals.<sup>1</sup> Headlining this new leadership class was Festus Mogae, who became vice-president under President Quett Masire in 1992 and succeeded Masire as president in 1998. Mogae, unlike Khama and Masire, had been a career technocrat, first as a director at the International Monetary Fund and then as Governor of the Bank of Botswana, before joining the Cabinet in 1989 as Minister of Finance.<sup>2</sup>

As president from 1998 to 2008, Mogae received accolades for his government’s AIDS eradication programmes and generally staid leadership style. But he devoted relatively little energy to ensuring that the political needs of the party were being met. Mogae once noted, “the problem with us in Africa is that individuals ... are more important than institutions: political parties must be more important than their leaders [and] the government ... must be more important than the president.”<sup>3</sup> Yet as the 1994 election had demonstrated, the BDP needed a president who could re-energise the party’s traditional bases of support,

---

<sup>1</sup> Lengwe-Katembula Mwansa, Taolo Lucas, and Kwaku Osei-Hwedie, “The Practice of Social Policy in Botswana,” *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 13, no. 2 (1998): 65.

<sup>2</sup> David Sebudubudu and Mokganedi Zara Botlhomilwe, “The Critical Role of Leadership in Botswana’s Development: What Lessons?,” *Leadership* 8, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 29–45, doi:10.1177/1742715011426962.

<sup>3</sup> Jay Naidoo, “A Leader I Would Vote for: Botswana’s Former President Festus Mogae,” April 4, 2014, <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2014-04-04-a-leader-i-would-vote-for-botswanas-former-president-festus-mogae/#.VVvcgkaZqVB>.

especially rural, elderly, and impoverished communities, as well as reach new political constituencies in the rapidly urbanising country that was Botswana at the turn of the millennium. By 2004, the popular vote for the BDP had fallen further to 52 percent.

In searching for a leader who could renew support for the BDP, the party's elites turned to the man with the most famous name in the country's history, Khama. The son of the first president and founder of the country, Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama ("Ian Khama") had been a member of the BDP for all of one day when he was sworn in as Vice-President of Botswana in April 1998. Nevertheless, his attributes and attitude toward government in other ways made him the ideal individual, at least politically, to become next-in-line for the presidency. His status as a tribal chief, a position he inherited from his father, gave his candidacy added appeal among Botswana's rural populace.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Khama's career in the Botswana Defence Forces, where he had occupied a commanding rank since he was in his mid-20s, congealed a party that had splintered in the late 1990s owing to suspicions of corruption by the Masire government.<sup>5</sup> Though he lacked political credentials prior to 1998, Khama's inextricable ties to the party positioned him to become a president who could restore the BDP to its historical pre-eminence.

### **Drought relief, the economy, and the BDP's ebbing social protection conservatism**

When Khama stepped into the presidency after an unremarkable ten-year stint as vice-president, he inherited a BDP development strategy that had been largely responsible for buoying the party during four decades of political leadership.<sup>6</sup> The country's lucrative mineral resources allowed the government to fund expansive infrastructural development projects as well as to provide Botswana with healthcare and education at a rate that was not matched by any other country in the region. Economic growth of about 9 percent per year ensured that few voters would wish to challenge the ruling party's stewardship of the economy for fear of "rocking the boat."<sup>7</sup> At the same time, early BDP governments implemented an extensive array of social protection programmes that initially featured support for farmers and, in the case of drought, extensive food aid for all Botswana who were unable to engage in livelihood-generating activity.

In addition to its economic growth track record, the government's early welfare programmes served as powerful motivators for the country's (then) mostly rural electorate to support the BDP. Under Ian Khama's father, the Accelerated Rain-fed Agriculture Programme (ARAP) and Arable Land Development Programme (ALDEP) supported smallholder herders and cultivators with livestock and farming implements. Both programmes were implemented during election years (1974 and 1979, respectively), suggesting that the BDP wished to emphasise to voters that the party would continue to develop the country through agriculture.<sup>8</sup> But the government's efforts to develop agriculture in the late 1970s and 1980s were on the whole no match for the drought that would beset the country.

---

<sup>4</sup> Sebudubudu and Botlhomilwe, "The Critical Role of Leadership in Botswana's Development," 42.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Good, "The Presidency of General Ian Khama: The Militarization of the Botswana 'Miracle,'" *African Affairs*, December 14, 2009, adp086, doi:10.1093/afraf/adp086.

<sup>6</sup> Government minister David Magang called Khama a "closed book" as so little was publicly known about him. Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Daron Acemoglu, Simon H. Johnson, and James A. Robinson, "An African Success Story: Botswana," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2001, doi:10.2139/ssrn.290791.

<sup>8</sup> Mwansa, Lucas, and Osei-Hwedie, "The Practice of Social Policy in Botswana," 62.

When drought hit the country beginning in 1978, the government was forced to change tack. As President Masire explained in the party's 1984 election manifesto, the government had been forced to shift its policy priorities away from institutional development in favour of relief from drought.<sup>9</sup> At first, this response took the form of food aid, which was distributed in part through a Destitute Persons Programme (introduced in 1980) that made food baskets available to people living in chronic poverty.<sup>10</sup> Drought forced the BDP by the 1980s to begin to provide social safety nets that could ensure food security for rural people.<sup>11</sup> Social protection had been extremely limited under Seretse Khama, who had been reluctant to provide welfare that he believed would detract, both in funding and in focus, from development projects in infrastructure and education.

In addition to prompting an expansion of the Botswanan welfare state, which slowed development, heavy drought in the 1980s hampered the ability of rural Batswana to engage in sustainable agriculture projects. Drought hampered the BDP's agricultural development programmes such as ARAP, but also disrupted traditional livelihoods.<sup>12</sup> The implications of this disruption were politically hazardous for the BDP. Indeed, it had been the ability of the Seretse Khama government to ensure social stability for the country's historically rural populace that had underpinned strong electoral support for the party.<sup>13</sup> Masire was aware that the agricultural production strategy was becoming decreasingly effective:

We in the BDP were also concerned about the drift to towns for social reasons. In the rural areas, people had a traditional way of making a living and carrying on with their lives. In the cities, they either got a job or they just become lost souls. The traditional safety nets—going to live at your uncle's place, or borrowing oxen from someone else to plough your lands if you had no oxen—had no parallel in the towns. We talked about it in cabinet; we talked about it in party meetings; and we talked about it in parliamentary caucuses. It was very much a part of our thinking as we developed our economic policies.<sup>14</sup>

The party therefore needed a way to maintain livelihoods and keep people productive, if they hoped to ensure stability, while at the same time avoiding losses to the rate of development.<sup>15</sup> With drought in the 1980s continuing to limit agricultural output, the government decided it would employ people in development projects instead. This policy shift marked the end of

---

<sup>9</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 1984

<sup>10</sup> The Government of Botswana also features several more targeted social safety net schemes. These include Community Home-based Care (CHBC), which was launched in 1995 as a response to the HIV/AIDS crisis, and provides clinical medical assistance and a food basket to beneficiaries. The Old Age Pension, which was introduced in 1996 and provides a means-untested monthly transfer of P300 to Batswana over the age of 64. The Veterans Program (introduced 1998) provides a cash stipend of about P400 to veterans of World War II or their spouses. The Orphan Care Program, established in 1999 for minors who have two parents who are deceased, provides food baskets and other items such as schools uniforms and a transportation allowance. The government also sponsors extensive feeding programmes for "Vulnerable Groups" and primary and secondary school students. World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," December 2013, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/17846>.

<sup>11</sup> Mwansa, Lucas, and Osei-Hwedie, "The Practice of Social Policy in Botswana," 62.

<sup>12</sup> David Sebudubudu, "The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa: Botswana-A Relatively Successful African Initiative," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 4, no. 7 (2010): 254.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Happy Siphambe, PhD, Professor, University of Botswana, October 22, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Sir Quett Ketumile Joni Masire, *Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat*, ed. Stephen R. Lewis Jr (Gaborone, Botswana: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 217.

<sup>15</sup> Sebudubudu, "The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa," 254.

the BDP's initial "assumption that the rural communities had adequate systems of support for the welfare of all their members."<sup>16</sup>

Starting in 1982, the Masire government dispensed drought relief to able-bodied Batswana in the form of cash-for-work programmes in order to replace the income that was lost to crop failure.<sup>17</sup> Drought relief (*namola leuba*) in Botswana during these years was not monotypic: food aid for vulnerable groups including children and nursing women, remote-dwellers, and other "destitutes"; cash in exchange for short-term work on local development projects for able-bodied adults.<sup>18</sup> During the drought of 1992-1993, for instance, roughly 400,000 Batswana received food aid and 100,000 labourers were provided short-term employment for several months of the year. Jobs were varied but often involved infrastructure projects including the construction of "dams, roads, classrooms, community halls and houses for extension workers in the rural areas."<sup>19</sup> Labourers received a very modest cash stipend of approximately P130 per week, but the amounts were nonetheless sufficient to have "saved the lives of countless people."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, without these relief schemes, which ensured that rural household incomes declined only modestly during the extended drought of the early 1980s, the resultant disruption to rural communities would likely have upset traditional livelihoods on a massive scale.<sup>21</sup>

Politically, the drought relief programmes that government implemented (on an annualised basis) throughout much of the 1980s proved a major impetus for voters in rural areas to support the BDP. According to the 1989 BDP election manifesto, the party "takes pride in the fact that despite periods of prolonged drought which have adversely affected production, Batswana have been able to maintain their close ties with the land."<sup>22</sup> This is so because we [the BDP] have always been quick to introduce sound assistance programmes during periods of drought." The BDP government's implementation of drought-related welfare was extremely influential in these years, with PEPs apparently driving significant political support for the ruling party:

The single most important reason given by respondents ... for being a member of the BDP was the Drought Relief Programme. Through this project, where many people are fed, subsidized, employed and assisted in so many ways, the ruling party has successfully resisted political inroads into its popularity, especially in the rural areas.<sup>23</sup>



<sup>16</sup> Onalenna Selolwane, "From National to People's Poverty in Changing Policy Regimes," *Poverty Reduction and Changing Policy Regimes in Botswana*, 2012, 134.

<sup>17</sup> Ngonidzashe Munemo, *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices* (Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2012), 153.

<sup>18</sup> Ngonidzashe Munemo, *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*.

<sup>19</sup> Mokganedi Zara Botlhomilwe and David Sebudubudu, "Elections in Botswana: A Ritual Enterprise?," *Open Area Studies Journal* 4 (2011): 98.

<sup>20</sup> Gooch and McDonald, cited in Ngonidzashe Munemo, *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Harvey and Stephen R. Lewis, *Policy Choice and Development Performance in Botswana* (Macmillan, 1990), 282.

<sup>22</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 1989

<sup>23</sup> John D. Holm and Patrick Molutsi, *Democracy in Botswana: The Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Gaborone, 1-5 August 1988* (Ohio Univ Pr, 1989), 128.

With BDP landslide victories in 1984 and 1989, including victories in over 90 percent of constituencies and a nearly two-thirds majority of the national popular vote, discretionary drought relief undoubtedly served both the party's political and policy agendas in the 1980s.<sup>24</sup>

The BDP's political dominance seemingly assured thanks to discretionary drought relief, political concerns around social protection strategy began to make way for more technocratic considerations. As was announced in the BDP's 1989 manifesto, drought relief planning would thenceforth "be tied to the overall [development] strategy because drought is a lurking danger in Botswana that the country must continuously be prepared to combat."<sup>25</sup> Assuming that the party's electoral dominance would last, BDP leaders in 1991 decided to institutionalise spending on drought relief, which as a discretionary measure was proving to be too expensive. This institutionalisation allowed for "greater policy and institutional preparedness," resulting in more comprehensive support for vulnerable populations during the drought periods that followed in 1992-1993, 1995-1997, and 2001-2005.<sup>26</sup> Politically speaking however, incorporating drought relief—and accompanying public works programmes—into the standing budget limited somewhat the discretion that incumbents had to determine when and how drought relief would be implemented. Whereas drought relief served as an important political tool until the 1990s, its bureaucratisation decreased the potency of drought relief to drive electoral support for the party by the time Ian Khama became president in 2008.

This decision of the BDP leadership to depoliticise drought relief, however, was not made with a complete understanding of how drought had fundamentally changed the country's demographic makeup. Despite the early success of drought relief to strengthen political support for the party in the 1980s, the "incalculable harm" that drought had beset upon the rural populace, as Masire put it, had not assuaged the migration of many thousands of Batswana to cities and towns in search of new sources of livelihood.<sup>27</sup> The government had "poured a great deal of money [US\$13 million per year] into drought relief to keep body and soul together for people," as well as promoting the industrialisation that more than doubled per-capita GDP between 1980 and 1990.<sup>28</sup>

Yet the magnitude of drought combined with the loss of many breadwinners to the AIDS pandemic toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century sparked a demographic transition from rural areas to the country's burgeoning urban centres.<sup>29</sup> The population of Gaborone, once a small village, for instance, was growing at a rate of almost 15 percent per year between 1971 and 1975.<sup>30</sup> A country that was more than 80 percent rural-dwelling in 1981 became for the first time a majority urban nation by the time Ian Khama inherited the presidency in 2008. (In 2011, more than 60 percent of Batswana lived in urban areas.<sup>31</sup>) The BDP, unable or unwilling to invest nearly as much capital on job creation in cities as compared to rural areas,

---

<sup>24</sup> Ngonidzashe Munemo, *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*, 158.

<sup>25</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 1989

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>27</sup> Masire, *Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat*, 218.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.; From Reuters, "Botswana Appeals for Drought Aid," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1987, [http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-09/news/mn-490\\_1\\_drought-aid](http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-09/news/mn-490_1_drought-aid).

<sup>29</sup> Amy R. Poteete, "The Absence of Intergroup Violence in Botswana: An Assessment of the Role of Development Strategies," *The Economic Roots of Conflict and Cooperation in Africa*, 2013, 183.

<sup>30</sup> Coralie Bryant, Betsy Stephens, and Sherry MacLiver, "Rural to Urban Migration: Some Data from Botswana," *African Studies Review* 21, no. 02 (September 1978): 85–99, doi:10.2307/523664.

<sup>31</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Botswana Demographics Profile 2014," August 23, 2014, [http://www.indexmundi.com/botswana/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/botswana/demographics_profile.html).

was as a consequence of this demographic shift losing its traditional base of electoral support. By 1994, the BNF had galvanised significant support in cities which featured many disgruntled migrants, leading to a significant dip in BDP support in the election that year.

Another major catalyst of discontent for many Batswana was the government's relative inability to convert public revenues into fully inclusive growth for all citizens. The BDP through the first three decades of its rule had relied on a tremendous economic growth rate—the fastest in the world from 1966 to 1989—to be the “rising tide that lifted all ships.”<sup>32</sup> Ample public revenues allowed the government to make investments in education, infrastructure, and health. Beyond these strategic investments, however, the early BDP leaders followed a frugal public policy. This “parsimonious,” market-oriented development brand, as Seekings characterised the early BDP governments, fostered only minimal inclusion in economic participation for Botswana's poor.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, while GDP per capita rose from US\$50 in 1967 to US\$2,583 in 1991, the benefits of growth did not trickle down fully to the masses, especially to the rural poor. Persistent poverty, which was in large part the outcome of the government's heavy reliance of mineral extraction to drive economic growth, characterised much of the populace even at the end of the millennium.<sup>34</sup> Nearly one-third of the country was still living on less than US\$1.25 per day in 2002-2003 with a majority of this population inhabiting the rural parts of the country.<sup>35</sup> The BDP's historical strategy of fiscal conservatism, though it ensured the government had resources to spare on expanding drought relief, did little to mediate the country's uneven wealth distribution through inclusive job creation.<sup>36</sup> By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Botswana had become one of the most unequal societies in Africa.

The task of Ian Khama by the late 2000s was therefore to generate support for a party whose historical support base had been significantly reduced, owing to the effects of drought and insufficiently inclusive growth. To help overcome this handicap, the president relied on a new social protection strategy. Specifically, he strengthened the government's old public employment programmes (PEPs), which had been associated with drought relief, and then repurposed them to reflect a new public focus on poverty reduction through employment creation. By changing the way the government's employment-based social protection programmes were being marketed and by strengthening them further, Khama could better address national unemployment concerns and broaden the scope of programmes to include the urban as well as rural poor. These programmatic efforts to recast the government's decades-old public employment strategy were characteristic of the Khama social protection “brand,” as the following section will elucidate.

---

<sup>32</sup> Charles Harvey, “Botswana: Is the Economic Miracle Over?,” *Journal of African Economies* 1, no. 3 (November 1, 1992): 335–68.

<sup>33</sup> Seekings, Jeremy, “Welfare Reform and the Conservative Social Contract: Botswana under Botswana Democratic Party Governments, 1994-2010,” forthcoming 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Lesego Sekwati, Nettimi Narayana, and Mpho Raboloko, “Understanding the Nature of Household Poverty in Botswana,” *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 26, no. 1 (2013): 71–82.

<sup>35</sup> BIDPA and International Poverty Centre, “Poverty Status Report for Botswana: Incidence, Trends, and Dynamics,” Research Project Report, (September 2005), 41.

<sup>36</sup> Kempe Ronald Hope Sr and Wayne A Edge, “Growth with Uneven Development: Urban-Rural Socio-Economic Disparities in Botswana,” *Geoforum* 27, no. 1 (February 1996): 53–62, doi:10.1016/0016-7185(95)00031-3.



## Ian Khama and the new vision for public employment

Under Ian Khama, the government's discourse around public works schemes changed. The BDP Minister of Finance Baledzi Gaolathe, whose service spanned the Mogae and Khama governments, articulated the new emphasis around PEPs in his 2009 Budget Speech to the National Assembly. "In the past, Government addressed poverty through a number of strategies including provision of infrastructure and basic services," Gaolathe noted.<sup>37</sup> "As we refine our anti-poverty initiatives, we will now place emphasis on improving the livelihoods of Batswana, and engaging in productive activities." The emphasis on productivity as a remedy for the country's poverty challenges epitomised the programmatic aspect of Khama's social protection brand.

The most prominent programme to be the result of Khama's re-marketing effort has been the Ipelegeng Programme. Botswana's drought relief programmes essentially ended in 2008 with the introduction of Ipelegeng, which was known in its first year as the Labour Intensive Public Works Programme. Despite the name change, this programme resembled the old programmes in virtually every way, save for the fact that Ipelegeng operates throughout the year and regardless of drought conditions. Like its predecessor programme, Ipelegeng has employed vulnerable Batswana, though the programme restricts participation to working-age adults of a minimum eighteen years old. Ipelegeng participants are employed in jobs such as "maintenance of drift fences, [schools], health facilities, staff houses and government facilities; desilting of dams and storm water drains; [and] vegetation control."<sup>38</sup> The Ministry of Local Government manages the programme and, as of 2014, disbursed salaries of P480 per month plus a daily meal (P100 per-month value) to labourers, who are employed six hours per day and twenty-two days per month.<sup>39</sup> With the national unemployment rate consistently exceeding 15 percent during the Khama presidency, the demand for participation among unemployed persons has been so high that local recruitment offices have had to institute a lottery system for people wishing to work.<sup>40</sup> The programme is self-targeting in that the meagre benefits mean that in practice only the poor participate.<sup>41</sup>

Ipelegeng may have been in its structure rooted in drought relief, but the programme was also the culmination of a BDP policy evolution that, motivated by declining mineral revenues, stressed the need to engage welfare recipients in economically productive projects.<sup>42</sup> An important policy document in this regard was the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (NSPR), which was launched in 2003 during the Mogae presidency. Through the NSPR, the government sought to spark the establishment of economic empowerment schemes and job creating programmes that could also alleviate poverty.<sup>43</sup> The NSPR's central tenet was that the "self-empowerment of citizens" should be the primary focus of any effort

---

<sup>37</sup> Budget Address 2009

<sup>38</sup> "Ipelegeng Programme," *Ministry of Local Government (MLG)*, n.d., <http://www.gov.bw/en/Ministries--Authorities/Ministries/Ministry-of-Local-Government-MLG1/Tools-and-Services/Services1/Ipelegeng-Project1/>.

<sup>39</sup> World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," 29.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 4. The cited unemployment rates come from the Government of Botswana statistics bureau. These data consistently underreport the true rate of unemployment, according to several key informants consulted as part of this report.

<sup>41</sup> Poverty was measured in one representative survey by the number of cattle owned that labourers owned, a common proxy for wealth in Botswana. Among survey respondents, fewer than one-quarter owned any cattle.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Happy Siphambhe, PhD, Professor, University of Botswana.

<sup>43</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," June 2012, [http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana\\_2012-004\\_Final\\_Ipelegeng.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana_2012-004_Final_Ipelegeng.pdf).

to achieve sustainable reductions in poverty. To this end, the authors of the NSPR proposed sixteen specific poverty reduction initiatives that would spur creation of employment, especially in rural parts of the country. While few of these programmes were ever implemented, the NSPR presaged the Khama government's focus on reducing poverty by increasing productivity on state-sponsored projects.

Another seminal policy document to which Khama often referred in his discourse focusing on poverty eradication was the *Vision 2016*. The *Vision* aligned the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Botswana with the government's own stated aspirations to eradicate absolute poverty by the time Botswana turned 50 in 2017.<sup>44</sup> The document, which was introduced in 1997, just prior to Khama's entering politics, established that "Batswana will be active participants ... not passive beneficiaries [in poverty eradication] ... [and that] while Government has an undeniable and critical role to play *seabe sa Motswana mongwe le mongwe* ("the role of every Motswana") is [to] marshal his or her best energies and resources towards the realisation of the *Vision*."<sup>45</sup> Khama's stated dedication to following the *Vision 2016* document both in its means and its ends further shaped the president's social protection approach.<sup>46</sup>

### **Ipelegeng, the heart of the Khama brand**

Entering the presidency at the height of the global financial crisis, President Khama prioritised the creation of employment and the reduction of poverty in his early government. "Today, the country faces challenges that require further responses and initiatives," he declared in his April 2008 inaugural address.<sup>47</sup> "Areas that I feel need special emphasis are employment creation and poverty alleviation, programmes for the youth, health, housing and the fight against crime." The worldwide recession had provided an initial impetus for Khama's policy emphases during the early years of his government. The recession had entered Botswana through the diamond industry, of which Botswana is a leading international supplier.<sup>48</sup> In 2008, the country's real GDP contracted by 6 percent and jobs in the mining sector fell by almost 10 percent. Nearly one out of five Batswana lived below the poverty datum line and the unemployment rate was 18 percent, though this rate was no doubt much higher among the youth and in rural areas.<sup>49</sup> Within four months of taking office, Khama introduced the Ipelegeng Programme as the principal agent by which to combat the effects of the recession, according to the party's 2014 manifesto.<sup>50</sup> But even after the worst effects of the recession had ebbed, Khama's employment programmes continued to comprise a major focus of his policy agenda. Whereas discrete periods of drought were the spark that motivated former presidents to implement relief through temporary employment schemes, the fact that Khama's programmes were not predicated on weather conditions but rather on the existence of poverty and unemployment ensured a continuing rationale for their existence.

---

<sup>44</sup> Jeremy Seekings, "Welfare Reform and the Conservative Social Contract: Botswana under Botswana Democratic Party Governments, 1994-2010," 2015, forthcoming.

<sup>45</sup> "Realising the Dream / Seabe Sa Motswana Mongwe Le Mongwe," *Towards Prosperity for All*, n.d., <http://www.vision2016.co.bw/vision-content.php?vid=31>.

<sup>46</sup> "One on One with President Ian Khama," *The Voice*, July 18, 2014, <http://www.thevoicebw.com/2014/07/18/one-one-president-ian-khama/>.

<sup>47</sup> Inauguration Address, 2008

<sup>48</sup> United Nations Global Pulse, <http://www.unglobalpulse.org/resources/brief-effects-global-economic-crisis-botswana>.

<sup>49</sup> "Data: Botswana," <http://data.worldbank.org/country/botswana?display=default>.

<sup>50</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 2014

While Ipelegeng, Khama's chief public employment scheme during his presidency, may have resembled structurally the former drought relief programmes and resonated with pre-existing BDP policy aspirations, the president's efforts to realise these programmes and market them as central to his *social* policy agenda made them fundamentally his own. Without "reinventing the wheel," Khama essentially rebranded drought relief with a new public emphasis around combatting poverty and developing the country by striving for the employment of all able-bodied persons. Though Ipelegeng offered to beneficiaries only short-term employment of up to several months, the president declared it to be a "permanent programme and a poverty eradication strategy," according to Presidential Directive 19(a) (2008), and "as part of our national development agenda."<sup>51</sup>

Khama's decision to transform the government's employment programmes from being predicated on drought to serving a broader goal of poverty eradication was the ultimate result of a realisation that in the drought-battered Botswana of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, government income relief needed to become less reactive and more proactive.<sup>52</sup> With extensive drought making agricultural activity as a primary means of income perennially tenuous for smallholder farmers, Khama's policy emphasis shift around employment programmes transformed them from being about mitigating loss to instead "providing needed employment."<sup>53</sup> That employment was in fact needed to ensure national Dignity, one of the four themes that characterised Khama's policy agenda along with Discipline, Development, and Democracy (the "4 D's").<sup>54</sup> As the president articulated in his 2010 State of the Nation Address:

Our development goal is to ultimately ensure the **dignity of all citizens** through mutual respect and empowerment through productive excellence. This administration thus has as its ultimate vision a nation that is secure in its individual and collective accomplishments, while showing respect for others at home and abroad. If we pull together we can eradicate absolute poverty by achieving greater prosperity through self-empowering enterprise.<sup>55</sup>

"Dignity" and "enterprise" from the beginning characterised the Khama presidency, and although previous presidents had offered similar rhetoric linking the government's job creation and poverty eradication objectives, Khama reified that rhetoric with a considerable programmatic effort. Ipelegeng, specifically, has "taken centre stage and [is the chief mechanism through which Khama] seeks to achieve some of the aspirations [of the] 5 Ds development strategy."<sup>56</sup>

The early marketing around the Ipelegeng Programme was very much in line with the president's articulated vision for national development. Most immediately, the decision to rename the programme "Ipelegeng," which is often translated as "self-reliance" or "people

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> "Support to Smallholder Arable Farmers in Botswana: Agricultural Development or Social Protection?" (UNDP-UNEP-Environment Initiative, 2013), [http://www.unpei.org/sites/default/files/e\\_library\\_documents/Botswana\\_POLICY\\_Brief\\_Support\\_to\\_smallholder\\_arable\\_farmers\\_in\\_Botswana.pdf](http://www.unpei.org/sites/default/files/e_library_documents/Botswana_POLICY_Brief_Support_to_smallholder_arable_farmers_in_Botswana.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> Sebudubudu, "The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa," 254.

<sup>54</sup> Khama later added a fifth 'D,' Delivery, to his stated policy vision. According to an official October 2009 posting located on the government's website, Khama was "humbled by the expression of faith and trust bestowed upon Him and his Government, [and so] introduced a fifth component – Delivery. ... He emphasized Delivery as a crucial element of the nation's strategy in going forward.

<sup>55</sup> Emphasis is mine.

<sup>56</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 16.

must carry themselves on their own backs,” marked an important discursive shift away from the “relief” programmes that had been associated with the welfare state under Botswana’s three former presidents. This concept of self-reliance has been an important rhetorical preoccupation of the Khama presidency and the Ipelegeng Programme has undoubtedly served to reify that new discursive emphasis. “Where we once practised self-reliance (ipelegeng), at both the individual and community levels, we now too often tend to rely on others and the State to provide for us,” commented Khama on what he believed to be the nation’s prevailing mindset toward work.<sup>57</sup>

PEPs under Khama were therefore no longer about compensating for income lost to drought, but rather mechanisms for achieving self-development. According to the government’s website, Ipelegeng “shifted its focus from drought relief to poverty alleviation in 2008,” a statement that simultaneously demonstrates the structural consistency between the old and new programmes, and notes the Khama-era change in programmatic focus.<sup>58</sup> Explaining the purpose for this shift in focus, Khama noted in 2012 that:

Poverty eradication is no simple task, for one, a particular action of charity could motivate them to step out of poverty, but for another, the same act could make them governement [*sic*] dependent individuals, as such, programs implemented are always done in the best interest of the poor to help them realise that hardwork will lead to something good. Our vision for ipelegeng isnt [*sic*] necessarily about giving people money and good food, but rather instil the idea and habit of waking up early to go and do something (work) with oneself. Remember, ‘laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.’<sup>59</sup>

This mandate to have the individual participate in his or her own development had been the clarion call of the NSPR and *Vision 2016*, but Khama was the first president to realise, through Ipelegeng, its prescription in a programmatic way.

The president has furthermore positioned Ipelegeng at the centre of his effort to project a policy focus around discipline. In his 2008 inauguration address, Khama declared that “No democracy can exist without discipline”—another pillar of his “4 D’s”—which confirmed the sentiment that many Batswana had already ascribed to the former military commander.<sup>60</sup> Efforts to eliminate poverty and develop the country, Khama suggested from early on his presidency, would necessitate a heightened work ethic, something that the president has frequently argued must change in Botswana. Only with this “mindset change,” as the president emphasised in his 2009 State of the Nation Address, could Batswana achieve the country’s other policy aspirations: Dignity, Development, and Democracy.<sup>61</sup> Ipelegeng has thus been an important manifestation of the president’s drive to cultivate an image of strong leadership, necessary for the development of the country.

<sup>57</sup> “Botswana: Khama: State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana, to the Opening of the Fifth Session of Parliament (03/11/2008),” *Polity.org.za*, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.polity.org.za/article/botswana-khama-state-of-the-nation-address-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-botswana-to-the-opening-of-the-fifth-session-of-parliament-03112008-2008-11-03>.

<sup>58</sup> See the Ministry of Local Government website as of May 2015: <http://www.gov.bw/en/Ministries--Authorities/Ministries/Ministry-of-Local-Government-MLG1/Tools-and-Services/Services1/Ipelegeng-Project1/>

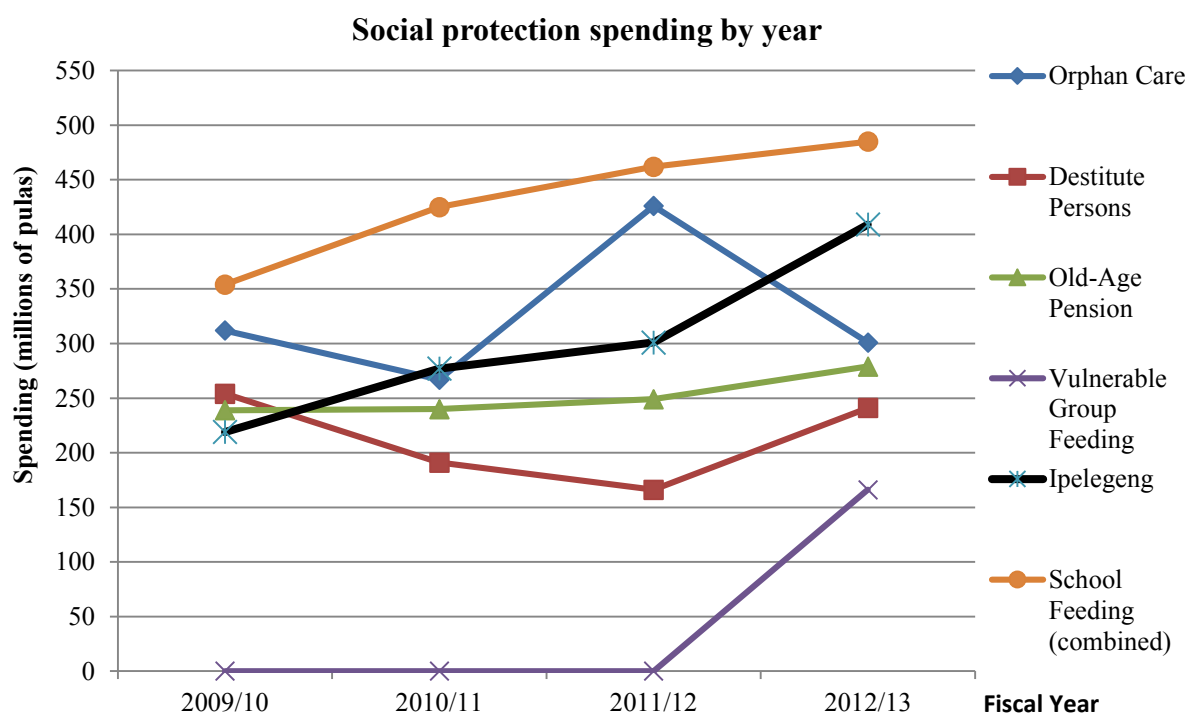
<sup>59</sup> Quote from Ian Khama, found on official BDP Facebook page. 30 May 2012, [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=115468075145715&story\\_fbid=466953029997216](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=115468075145715&story_fbid=466953029997216).

<sup>60</sup> Inauguration Address, 2008. Khama is almost always referred to in official government documents by his full title and name, President Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama.

<sup>61</sup> Pula, “Selected Press Releases: Inauguration Address the by President of the Republic of Botswana 2009 National Assembly 0830 Hours,” *Selected Press Releases*, October 29, 2009, <http://prgovbw.blogspot.com/2009/10/inauguration-address-by-president-of.html>.

Part of this presidential discourse on discipline was centred on the importance of citizen participation in the economy. Commenting on the role of Ipelegeng to reengage unemployed and impoverished able-bodied Batswana, Khama declared that “Instead of just sitting around [and] doing nothing, at least they [Ipelegeng labourers] can be contributing to the local communities whilst earning something and growing their local economies.”<sup>62</sup> Khama challenged further in his 2011 State of the Nation Address “all able-bodied citizens to take pride in fending for themselves and contributing towards the development of their country.”<sup>63</sup> The president’s broader moves to transition the Botswanan welfare state away from beneficiaries’ passive receipt of welfare (drought relief) to active participation in development (“self-reliance”) accompanied parallel reforms. For instance, shortly after taking office Khama ordered a review of the Destitute Persons Programme after completion of which he announced that 8,765 beneficiaries were able-bodied and would thus be moved to the Ipelegeng Programme.<sup>64</sup> The president’s actions around participation in this regard were fundamental to building up his broader social protection brand around work.

Ipelegeng, as judged by consistent spending rises, has occupied an increasingly sizable role in defining the Khama presidency. Beginning in the 2009-2010 fiscal year, Ipelegeng received P219 million and had increased its share of funding to P409 million in 2012-2013.<sup>65</sup> This nearly 87-percent increase in spending on the programme occurred, moreover, when the government’s total expenditure on “Social Safety Nets” increased by only 7 percent (P3,471 million to P3,698 million). Though the programme received relatively little funding at its inception, by the 2012-2013 fiscal year Ipelegeng had become one of the largest social protection schemes in Botswana, second only to the combined school feeding



<sup>62</sup> Botswana Government, President Khama Extended BTV Interview, January 21, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32USZ-0GYWo>.

<sup>63</sup> Khama, State of the Nation Address, 2011.

<sup>64</sup> World Bank, “Botswana Social Protection Assessment,” 49. By 2010, about two-thirds of these workers had been moved to the Ipelegeng program.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 42.

programmes.<sup>66</sup> In 2014-2015, during which time Botswana held an election, spending on Ipelegeng climbed another 42 percent to P580.6 million. As Ipelegeng accrued greater relative expenditure with each passing year, the programme came increasingly to characterise the president's public policy agenda.

### **Khama's rebranded PEPs: engaging old constituencies and reaching new ones**

Ian Khama's transformation of the government's PEPs from being predicated on drought to serving a broader goal of poverty eradication resulted in a programme that could, to a greater degree than before, uplift both rural and urban Batswana. Early on, as the Minister of Finance noted in the 2009 Budget Address, the Labour Intensive Public Works Programme had begun to "provide relief in the form of supplementary income support to the poor and unemployed whilst at the same time carrying out essential development projects covering both urban and rural areas."<sup>67</sup> By comparison, drought relief under previous governments had been apportioned on a district-by-district basis depending on the duration and severity of the drought.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, districts with urban areas often received less drought relief funding or even none at all. Ipelegeng, because it was implemented across the country and year-round, served a more geographically diverse beneficiary population. This extended reach of Ipelegeng thus conferred benefits to the urban poor as well, expanding the reach of a programme that has become very much associated with the president.

Along these lines, one unusual aspect of the Ipelegeng Programme, especially given how the BDP has historically offered only targeted social protection schemes, has been the broad scope of its target constituency. In this regard, as one Ipelegeng project supervisor noted:

While other government safety net or poverty programmes have clear criteria for qualification and hence targeting, this is not the case with Ipelegeng. For example, there is a specific criteria developed for one to be defined as a destitute person or an orphan. Interestingly for Ipelegeng, poverty and vulnerability is by self definition. This means that anyone can work for Ipelegeng should they wish to define themselves as poor and are willing to work for the paltry P400.00.<sup>69</sup>

Maximising participation in the national economy, a theme of the Khama social policy agenda, has likely been the reason for why Khama has broadened the target constituency of the former drought relief PEPs. As one Village Development Committee representative responsible for implementation commented, "we want and recruit everyone because we want everyone to get a chance [to work in Ipelegeng] whether you are old, young or a person living with disability ... If you can work it is fine."<sup>70</sup> From these statements it is clear that Khama's rebranding of PEPs has been the grandest manifestation of his stated intention to engage all able-bodied Batswana, urban or rural, in self-development.

Despite Khama's efforts to extend his social protection programme to a broader constituency however, Ipelegeng seems to have had only a somewhat limited penetration into

---

<sup>66</sup> According to Seleka (2007), some 580,000 individuals are on feeding programmes which is about a third of the country's population. Sebudubudu, "The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa," 260.

<sup>67</sup> Budget Address, 2009. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>68</sup> Ngonidzashe Munemo, *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*.

<sup>69</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 102-103.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 105.

cities and towns. Of the 56,274 people working in the programme in May 2013, for instance, 18,034 (32%) were based in urban or semi-urban areas.<sup>71</sup> This ratio of rural to urban still meant that Ipelegeng had a more geographically diverse profile than the previous PEPs centred on drought relief, though like its antecedents still primarily targeted rural dwellers. With 11 percent of urban dwellers living below the poverty line, the programme was annually recruiting only a moderate fraction (about one-sixth) of the urban poor, though the number of participants was perhaps fewer than the Khama government had intended.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the Gaborone City Council reported in 2012 that the city was repeatedly failing to meet its quota for the Ipelegeng Programme.<sup>73</sup> Khama himself complained, during one of his many visits to Gaborone (and to communities around the country), that “people residing in Gaborone do not come forward to work for the Ipelegeng programme.”<sup>74</sup> Though Khama’s extension of PEPs to urban dwellers—a marked shift from the greater emphasis of rural targeting—has benefitted thousands of urban Batswana, the programme has fallen short of what seems to have been its expected outcome.<sup>75</sup>

In rural areas, by contrast, the programme has enjoyed strong approbation. According to one review, Ipelegeng “appears to be very popular among the poor people, especially those living in the rural and remote areas.”<sup>76</sup> In these areas where poverty levels exist often between 40 and 60 percent, according to the Central Statistics Office’s 2008 report, the programme has elicited a great deal of support. As one community leader characterised the reaction to the programme:

This *Kgotla* [tribal council] is usually filled up during recruitment for Ipelegeng because people have no jobs. ... In almost all the cases, the programme is fully subscribed, and in some cases oversubscribed, especially in ... settlements where no or very limited employment opportunities exists except for Ipelegeng. In almost all the districts surveyed, Ipelegeng is able to meet its quota and people are engaged on a rotational basis.<sup>77</sup>

Not only did Ipelegeng provide livelihood support to many rural communities, but the programme ensured that fewer rural people felt the need to venture into urban centres in search of work. According to a sampling of rural Ipelegeng participants, 73 percent stated a belief that employment opportunities in the Ipelegeng Programme had stopped migration to cities; this observation was corroborated by 70 percent of urban respondents.<sup>78</sup>

Khama’s calls for greater inclusion of women in economic activity also matched a rise in PEP participation by women, exceeding the already high levels of participation in former governments’ drought-contingent programmes. Women, whom Khama in the BDP’s 2014 election manifesto declared must be prepared to “participate in and contribute towards socio-economic, cultural and political development,” comprised 77 percent of Ipelegeng

---

<sup>71</sup> World Bank, “Botswana Social Protection Assessment,” 28.

<sup>72</sup> “Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme,” 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>74</sup> Thandy Tebogo, “Khama Walks about Gaborone West North,” *The Daily News*, July 22, 2013, <http://en.africatime.com/botswana/articles/khama-walks-about-gaborone-west-north>.

<sup>75</sup> “Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme,” 86.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>78</sup> This observation correlates strongly with trends in population data that show Botswana urbanising at a decreasing rate. Between 2005 and 2010, Botswana was urbanising at an average yearly rate of 2.50 percent, whereas from 2010-2015 the rate has proven to be 1.29 percent. Central Intelligence Agency, *The CIA World Factbook 2010* (Skyhorse Publishing Inc., 2009), 90; CIA World Factbook, “Botswana Demographics Profile 2014.”

participants in 2012.<sup>79</sup> PEPs in Botswana have generally engaged a greater proportion of women than men, primarily due to the fact that fewer women than men have education and skills training that would allow them to more readily find stable employment.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, over the five years between 1992 and 1996, some 50,000 people were employed annually in drought relief PEPs of whom between 60 and 70 percent each year were women.<sup>81</sup> The slightly higher enrolment of women in Ipelegeng compared to these former PEPs, plus Khama's rhetorical insistence on female participation in the economy, indicates that the president's social protection brand might be understood as being even more dedicated to creating income-generating opportunities for women.

### *Other programmes*

Toward the end of his first elected term, Khama's rhetoric on empowerment of vulnerable persons increasingly included mention of the youth. In his 2013 State of the Nation Address, for instance, Khama declared that "Poverty eradication and youth development are ... leading priorities" for his government. The president's efforts to engage young Batswana in gainful employment through PEPs has distinguished his commitment to youth empowerment from that of prior presidents. The Khama government's response "to the needs of the masses through service delivery and schemes targeted at the youth and unemployed graduates" has, with Ipelegeng, comprised an important part of his dual poverty-unemployment focus and, by extension, his social protection brand.<sup>82</sup>

Most prominent among Khama's youth social protection initiatives has been the Botswana National Service Programme (BNSP). Following a 2013 State of the Nation Address in which he dedicated "at least 11 paragraphs of his speech to the youth, the second longest time he spent on a subtopic," the president announced the launch of the "new" programme.<sup>83</sup> In fact, BNSP was the reincarnation of a former national service scheme called *Tirelo Sechaba*, which the government had terminated in 2000 because it was deemed, at an annual cost of P40 million, to be too expensive. In April 2014, the Khama government implemented BNSP, known colloquially as *Tirelo Sechaba*, "to engage youth in meaningful community development programmes, while giving them the needed experience for the world of work."<sup>84</sup> Participants, who range in age from 20 to 30, commit themselves to at least twelve months of service in their home communities, performing any number of low-skills jobs from distributing identity cards to maintaining parks to staffing crèches; all similar roles to the ones characterising Ipelegeng.<sup>85</sup> BNSP remunerates participants, who numbered about

<sup>79</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 48; BDP Election manifesto, 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Natural Resources and Environment Department, "Learning to Live with Drought and Climate Variability," *FAO Corporate Document Repository*, n.d., <http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/y5744e/y5744e0c.htm>.

<sup>81</sup> Teklu, Tesfaye. "Labor-intensive public works: The experience of Botswana and Tanzania." *Employment for poverty reduction and food security* (1995), 151.; [http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/project/target/bt\\_work.htm](http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/project/target/bt_work.htm)

<sup>82</sup> Botlhomilwe and Sebudubudu, "Elections in Botswana," 100.

[https://www.quandl.com/WORLDBANK/BWA\\_SL\\_UEM\\_1524\\_ZS-Botswana-Unemployment-youth-total-of-total-labor-force-ages-15-24](https://www.quandl.com/WORLDBANK/BWA_SL_UEM_1524_ZS-Botswana-Unemployment-youth-total-of-total-labor-force-ages-15-24)

<sup>83</sup> Justice Kavaheamatui, "President Khama's Speech Decoded," *Botswana Guardian*, November 8, 2013, <http://botswanaguardian.co.bw/latest-news/690-president-khama-s-speech-decoded.html>.

<sup>84</sup> Ian Khama, "State-of-the-Nation Address 2014," November 14, 2014, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201411141763.html>.

<sup>85</sup> Chedza Mmolawa, "Tirelo Sechaba to Alleviate Youth Unemployment," November 22, 2013, <http://www.echoonline.co.bw/index/index.php/local-news/item/809-tirelo-sechaba-to-alleviate-youth-unemployment>.



9,800 in June 2014, with an allowance of P500 per month plus a bonus of P200 for each month worked that can be recouped at the end of the programme.<sup>86</sup>

While BNSP provided relief to vulnerable Batswana, for Khama ostensibly it was yet another tool by which to engage people in the nation's collective poverty eradication efforts. In explaining his motivations for pursuing implementation of the programme, he noted in a 2014 interview:

What we [government officials] need to pick up on are those that are not doing anything productive.... By introducing Tirelo Sechaba [BNSP] we are saying that ... Wherever you are we are engaging the youth in the activities ... of their communities to be able to make an impact and a contribution within their communities. And we will be able to give them some allowance—yes, it is not a lot of money, but it is better than nothing—and so instead of sitting around and doing nothing, and whilst waiting for formal opportunities to come along, they can be useful.<sup>87</sup>

Despite the current programme's P178 million price tag—a much greater sum than the P40 million that caused the termination of the old Tirelo Sechaba, even after adjustment for inflation—the president's emphasis on engaging vulnerable youth and increasing national discipline through economic productivity no doubt justified the programme's restoration.<sup>88</sup>

Khama's other contributions to Botswana's social protection network, though small in scope relative to Ipelegeng, further characterised his public image as a leader dedicated to uplifting impoverished Batswana through work. Chief among these initiatives has been the Poverty Eradication Programmes, an umbrella scheme featuring 22 small-scale farming and small business stimulus programmes that furnish grants to poor Batswana who wish to start their own enterprises.<sup>89</sup> The mere fact that the president has equated "Poverty Eradication" with work reinforces the idea that Khama has marketed his government's social protection programmes as necessitating citizen initiative. Despite the limited scope of around 3,600 beneficiaries (at a cost of P104 million in 2012-2013), the president has nonetheless declared the programme as being one of the programmes that is foremost among his successful endeavours.

All-in-all, Khama has held up his social protection programmes not just as hallmarks of his social policy agenda, but as being among his most important contributions as president. In a 2014 interview recorded four months before the election, Khama was asked—outside of any discursive context on social programme—"What milestones have you achieved so far?" and responded by listing "Ipelegeng, Youth Economic Schemes [including the Youth Development Fund], EDD [Economic Diversity Drive], Poverty Eradication...."<sup>90</sup> The fact that Khama has dedicated his presidency to implementing PEPs that encompass a numerically expanded and more diverse beneficiary pool as compared to antecedents has reinforced a political brand that is very much intertwined with his social protection agenda.

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.; Thamani Shabani, "Half Quit Tirelo Sechaba," *Daily News*, June 19, 2014, <http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=12237>.

<sup>87</sup> Botswana Government, President Khama Extended BTV Interview.

<sup>88</sup> This comparison assumes a constant annual rate of inflation of 8 percent. "Botswana Inflation Rate | 1997-2015," accessed January 23, 2015, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/botswana/inflation-cpi>.

<sup>89</sup> World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," 30.

<sup>90</sup> "One on One with President Ian Khama."

## “Our Father’s programmes”: personalising social protection

One significant effect of Khama’s pursuing a work-oriented social protection agenda, including the rebranding of pre-existent PEPs to align with his poverty reduction discourse, has been a popular association of programmes, not with government *per se*, but with Khama personally. According to one observer:

Under Mogae [social protection programmes] were not taken as the president’s initiatives. They were just public programmes. But the tone has changed [under Khama]. People speak of these programmes: they call them “*mananeo a ga Rara*.” In our language it means “our Father’s programmes”—“our Father” being the president. ... These are Ian Khama’s programmes. They were here before, but the way they’ve been marketed since he came into office is that these are his programmes [and] ... they are attributed directly to his benevolence. ... They are public programmes but they are there because of the current president. That’s how it’s marketed.<sup>91</sup>

This personalisation of what would otherwise have been government PEPs has resulted in Khama becoming “a messiah amongst the ordinary people who are beneficiaries of his ‘pet projects’.”<sup>92</sup> To impoverished rural citizens with otherwise no access to stable employment, moreover, Khama has “become synonymous with government.”<sup>93</sup>

Popular approbation for Khama’s social protection approach, which has centred on what many citizens perceive as being the president’s own PEPs, have been reinforced by the president’s own actions. UNICEF’s 2012 review of Ipelegeng, for instance, included an observation that “the programme is given preference over others [i.e., other social protection programmes] because it was initiated by the state President.”<sup>94</sup> Khama’s frequent tours to meet with rural communities throughout the country have also allowed him to reinforce the rhetoric around creating jobs and poverty reduction that has comprised substantial parts of his public addresses. “At the kgotla meetings that he addressed, Khama often played the star at the expense of his ministers as he made the important pronouncements instead of leaving that to the concerned ministers,” commented one observer.<sup>95</sup> Whereas former presidents had generally opted to prescribe policies from the State House, Khama’s populism has resulted in his becoming the literal face of his programmes.

These efforts, though they have served to reinforce Khama’s political brand among the rural poor, nonetheless have not avoided criticism from urban intellectuals. Dumelang Saleshando, leader of the opposition Botswana Congress Party (BCP), lambasted the president who, he scorned as being “still on the learning curve of how the people he leads live by sitting around kgotla fires with them, while there are critical issues of development, high unemployment, delayed infrastructure that the president and his cabinet must be firmly

---

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Gape Kaboyakgosi, Senior Research Fellow, Public Sector Reforms Unit, BIDPA, October 30, 2014. “Rara,” which corresponds to “father” in Dr. Kaboyakgosi’s translation, does not generally mean a literal father but something more akin to a heavenly father or nonhuman beneficent male being. “*Mananeo a ga Tautona*” [“President”] and “*Mananeo a ga Khama*” also were “in reference to the government’s empowerment or poverty eradication programmes common phrases.”

<sup>92</sup> Edward Bule, “Will Khama Retire at the End of His Term?,” *The Midweek Sun*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.themidweeksun.co.bw/news/5059-will-khama-retire-at-the-end-of-his-term.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Kenneth Dipholo, “Botswana Has Become the Property of President Khama,” *Sunday Standard*, February 23, 2014, <http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php?NewsID=19209&GroupID=5>.

<sup>94</sup> “Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme,” 109.

<sup>95</sup> Edward Bule, “Will Khama Retire at the End of His Term?”

addressing.”<sup>96</sup> Though not all critics have fingered Khama for striving to enhance his political image directly through the personalisation of social protection programmes, for some observers it was problematic enough for the president to be “allowing his supporters to personalise government programmes and projects by [their] appendaging [*sic*] them to his name.”<sup>97</sup> Regardless of who was responsible for marketing the government’s PEPs as being fundamentally Khama initiatives, the fact that these programmes had become personalised and ascribed to “Our Father” indicates the popularity that their ostensible sponsor Khama enjoyed.

## Opposition branding, BDP counterbranding

Since 1994, opposition political parties in Botswana have become a significant force. In elections that year, the BNF won a then-unprecedented 37 percent of the vote (13 of 40 seats) in large part due to the support of recent rural migrants to cities and other urban dwellers upset with the government’s to stimulate job growth.<sup>98</sup> The ideological “father” of the BNF was its presidential candidate in 1994, the socialist firebrand Kenneth Koma. The founder, a Soviet-schooled intellectual who, despite his family’s considerable wealth, fashioned himself with crumpled clothes and adopted Setswana colloquialisms in a way that substantiated the “man of the people” image that he intended to portray.<sup>99</sup> According to a contemporary observer:

A substantial section of the electorate supports [the BNF] because its political message seems to be relevant to the socio-economic conditions of contemporary Botswana. The issues which it has stressed in its campaigns such as affordable housing, employment creation, better working conditions and the revamping of the education system resonate with more conviction amongst urban and peri-urban dwellers than amongst the peasantry.<sup>100</sup>

Koma’s campaign tactics in 1994, moreover, signified his commitment to reforming government in a way that would benefit the urban poor, for instance, by arranging for a motorcade of 600 vehicles carrying every BNF parliamentary candidate to parade through the Gaborone slum of Old Naledi, Koma’s self-appointed “political bunker.”<sup>101</sup> The BNF president, whose towering stature in the party inspired the codename “*Party ke Koma*” (“Koma is the party”), came to be known as an urban “messiah” among the poor and working-class communities of urban Botswana. His advocacy on behalf of youth activists seeking to have the age of suffrage changed from 21 to 18 years old—a policy that the BDP initially opposed—furthered his being seen as the youth’s foremost advocate in politics.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Kenneth Dipholo, “Botswana Has Become the Property of President Khama,” *Sunday Standard*, February 23, 2014, <http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php?NewsID=19209&GroupID=5>.

<sup>97</sup> Edward Bule, “Will Khama Retire at the End of His Term?”

<sup>98</sup> Mpho G. Molomo, “Understanding Government and Opposition Parties in Botswana,” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 85, doi:10.1080/14662040008447810.

<sup>99</sup> Danielle Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 191.

<sup>100</sup> Balefi Tsie, “The Political Context of Botswana’s Development Performance,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 4 (1996): 31.

<sup>101</sup> Kenneth Good, “Authoritarian Liberalism: A Defining Characteristic of Botswana,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 14, no. 1 (January 1996): 29–51, doi:10.1080/02589009608729580.

<sup>102</sup> Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*, 193. “Botswana” in *Compendium of Elections in Southern Africa* (2002), edited by Tom Lodge, Denis Kadima and David Pottie, EISA, 39–40. <http://www.content.eisa.org.za/old-page/botswana-constitutional-and-electoral-reform>

Inspired by the political brand of their ideologue Koma, party leaders issued a manifesto in 1994 that was designed to appeal to a growing urban working-class base. According to the manifesto, the BNF government would pursue “a strong civil society, and social welfare for the underprivileged members of our society,” and listed among its objectives the creation of an old age pension, dependent and orphans benefit, a contributory pension programmes, and unemployment benefits.<sup>103</sup> These proposals largely shaped the party’s social protection agenda, which were integral parts of its larger “social democratic programme.”<sup>104</sup>

The BCP emerged ahead of the 1999 election after disagreements with the commandeering Koma resulted in the defection of eleven MP’s led by former anti-Apartheid activist Michael Dingake. A “social democratic” programme also characterised the BCP brand.<sup>105</sup> The party’s 1999 manifesto, for instance, included the promise that the BCP would “introduce an orphan policy that guarantees social welfare support to all orphans (AIDS and non-AIDS orphans) and their primary carers” and criticised the BDP for lacking a “comprehensive social security and welfare system... in spite of high levels of unemployment.”<sup>106</sup> Similarly to the BNF, the BCP declared that it would “develop a social security and welfare system which will provide to all people regardless of income, category of work, gender and disability.”



Despite the fact that disagreements over leadership since 1999 have prevented the parties from unifying, members from both sides have noted that the two camps are ideologically alike. As BCP co-founder Paul Rantao observed, “the [BCP] party’s ideology will not be that different from [that] of the BNF. Its focus will be to try to articulate the interests of workers and the youth.”<sup>107</sup> Resisting pressure to integrate with the dominant BNF, the BCP has contested every election since its founding, achieving its largest delegation to parliament (four seats) in the 2009 election.

Though opposition parties have never ruled the country, the parties’ most lasting influence to date has perhaps been to force their ruling party adversary to incorporate their ideas into policy as a response to heightened electoral competition. Indeed, the opposition’s political inroads have been sufficiently worrisome to the BDP elites to induce “counter-branding” efforts with regard to social protection. In 1994, for instance, the BNF won unusually high support from elderly voters, which was in part what caused the BDP to receive less than 55 percent of the popular vote, an unprecedented low.<sup>108</sup> (The opposition also won each of Gaborone’s four parliamentary districts for the first time). This vote capture from a constituency that had historically supported the BDP was apparently enough to motivate counterbranding by the party: in 1996, the government sponsored legislation to

<sup>103</sup> BNF Election manifesto, 1994

<sup>104</sup> The 1999 BNF manifesto described its base as being “the urban poor and the working class in both rural and urban areas.”

<sup>105</sup> Both opposition parties in 2014 described themselves as social democratic. The parties are ostensibly modelled on post-war Scandinavian political economy. With regard to social protection, according to one BCP MP, this means that “as a social-democratic party, the party supports redistribution through wealth creation.” Interview with Dithapelo Keorapetse, Member of Parliament (BCP), October 30, 2014.

<sup>106</sup> The BDP in its 1999 manifesto declared that it would create an orphan care programme for (only) AIDS orphans. BDP Election manifesto, 1999.

<sup>107</sup> Molomo, “Understanding Government and Opposition Parties in Botswana,” 72.

<sup>108</sup> Sebudubudu, “The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa.”

enact an Old-Age Pension in line with what the BNF had been promoting, though this had not before been part of the BDP's platform.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to inducing the implementation of the Old-Age Pension, opposition advocacy for an orphan care programme ahead of the 1999 campaign likely influenced the ruling party's implementation of such a scheme that year. These policy shifts by the BDP toward opposition policy positions were starting to make apparent, as Molomo (2000) noted, that "the BNF has drawn the BDP closer to its position."<sup>110</sup> Supporting this notion is the fact that the rhetorical similarities of the ruling and opposition party manifestos have increased. The party's manifesto in 2004, for instance, noted that a BNF-led government would "introduce a comprehensive social security and welfare system (as opposed to BDP's Old Age Pension) that will give every deserving Motswana a minimum level of dignity as a human being."<sup>111</sup> However, it was not clear with any degree of specificity in what ways the BNF social security and welfare system would differ from what the BDP had already implemented. The BNF manifesto from 2004 also included a promise that a new government would "spearhead job creation programmes that will be matched with timely action to distribute wealth equitably through a collectively financed policy of social security." This rhetoric, though it too lacked policy specificity, signified what was becoming a convergence of opposition party ideas around PEPs and Ian Khama's own ideas for public employment, which were introduced five to ten years later. The BCP, for their part, offered in 2004 to implement a "comprehensive safety net for the disadvantaged, and work towards full employment, in recognition of the fact that employment is a human right." These statements too resonated with the employment-centred poverty reduction strategy that Khama subsequently gave special emphasis.

By the time Khama took office in 2008 and then pursued affirmation of his presidency in the 2009 election, the BDP had shifted its social protection approach dramatically since the party first came to power in the 1960s. Under Seretse Khama, the party brand vis-à-vis social protection was associated with food aid that government would disburse during drought as a relief measure. This later morphed into cash-for-work schemes, with the need for development project funding to be redirected to drought relief. Opposition inroads provided further impetus for social protection reforms, with the effect being that the ruling party began to counterbrand around features of the opposition's social-democratic agenda. With Ian Khama at the helm, the introduction of Ipelegeng and other PEPs suggested that the party was evermore invested in managing a social protection agenda with the kind of broad scope that opposition parties had long-before advocated. To the extent that the parties' brands around social protection were distinguishable by 2009, the principal differences hinged not on ideology but rather on leadership, programmatic implementation, and transfer levels to beneficiaries.

This convergence of BDP and opposition party social protection approaches was further reflected in opposition party manifestos themselves. In the 1990s, opposition party manifestos offered several policy suggestions that the government under the BDP, which not yet shifted fully from its conservative 1970s-era approach to social protection, had yet to

---

<sup>109</sup> "Botswana" in *Compendium of Elections in Southern Africa* (2002), edited by Tom Lodge, Denis Kadima and David Pottie, EISA, 39-40. <http://www.content.eisa.org.za/old-page/botswana-constitutional-and-electoral-reform>

<sup>110</sup> Molomo, "Understanding Government and Opposition Parties in Botswana," 72.

<sup>111</sup> Emphasis is mine.

implement (e.g. the old-age pension).<sup>112</sup> With BDP counterbranding accounting for a greater inclusion of vulnerable populations in the government's welfare programmes by the 2000s, these opposition parties shifted tack in their manifestos to instead criticising the BDP's inability to effectively implement existing programmes. In fact, coverage of social protection in the 2009 BNF manifesto was essentially the same as it had been since 1994.<sup>113</sup> Among the few differences between the two editions was a statement in the 2009 version describing the BNF as "the true Party of the masses, especially the poor, the working class, the peasants and sections of the middle class." What exactly motivated this insertion remains uncertain, but it was no doubt a possible reflection of a concern—with the BDP having significantly expanded the welfare state to include vulnerable groups—that the BNF needed to double down to voters on the party's commitment to best representing the interests of Botswana's poor.

Neither did the BCP offer new social protection policy ideas in their 2009 manifesto. The party did contend that the Old-Age Pension transfer amount should be trebled to P750 from P250 and the age of qualification lowered from 65 to 60 to match the legal age of retirement.<sup>114</sup> The opposition parties' criticisms of Khama and the ruling party were extensive, but on the government's role in pursuing social protection and poverty eradication, all three major parties in their manifestos did not significantly differ in terms of substantive policy ideas. According to BNF activist Bashi Mothusi, the parties "don't so much disagree with BDP's ideas around social protection; they just have qualms with the implementation and the amount of the transfers."<sup>115</sup> With Khama advancing a social protection brand that did not differ significantly in ideology from what opposition leaders have proposed to implement, elections in 2009 and 2014 seemed to be more referendums on Khama and/or the BDP leadership than on any substantive policy distinctions between parties.

In addition to shifting its social protection policy approach in response to increasing popular support for opposition parties, BDP with Khama at the helm has also adjusted its political strategy. Khama's status as a paramount chief and stature as the son of the first president were likely salient features of his public identity, but they have also facilitated a campaign-style leadership tactic to which many observers have ascribed his political popularity in rural areas of Botswana.<sup>116</sup> The president has been eager to traverse the country and in doing so has cultivated the perception that he has taken a strong interest in the welfare of the poor. Khama's visits to rural areas also routinely involve participation in the work of poverty alleviation by his own hands. In addition to convening kgotla meetings in which he invites local community leaders to offer ideas and air grievances, the president has been extensively



<sup>112</sup> BNF Election manifesto, 1994; " " 1999

<sup>113</sup> BNF Election manifesto, 2009

<sup>114</sup> BCP Election manifesto, 2009

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Bashi Mothusi, PhD, Lecturer, University of Botswana, October 21, 2014. UDC and BCP Election manifestos, 2014.

<sup>116</sup> Khama "remains popular particularly in the rural areas where he is largely perceived more as a chief than a sitting president." Sebudubudu and Botlhomilwe, "The Critical Role of Leadership in Botswana's Development," 42.



documented and photographed serving meals from breadlines, distributing care baskets, and delivering radios and blankets to elderly Batswana.<sup>117</sup>

Khama's populist behaviour has clearly endeared him to rural Batswana, many of whom regard the president positively for these demonstrations of empathy. Edgar Tsimane, a Motswana journalist, remarked on the president's appeal among vulnerable persons:

Khama wears so many hats: son of the first president of the country, king of Bamangwato tribe in central district, former soldier, commander-in-chief. Young boys would think of him as the guy who cannot be shot. ... He's popular also because part of his administration is creating a social safety net that borders on handouts. He likes to go around the country travelling, handing out blankets to the poor, and they all clamour after him to shake his hand."<sup>118</sup>

Others, such as one parliamentarian, were not as charitable as Tsimane: "The president seems comfortable sitting around the bonfire with old men in rural areas, distributing food hampers and blankets, and behaving like King, or Father Christmas."<sup>119</sup> Responding to such critics, who have contended that his extension of blankets, radios, food, and other handouts to all the vulnerable communities he visits have essentially bought votes for the BDP, Khama stated that "I cannot understand why somebody will want to criticise anybody for helping people in need."<sup>120</sup> Regardless of the controversy his tactics have solicited in the press, Khama's personal interactions with the rural poor have strengthened the poverty emphasis of his political brand and have, moreover, reinforced his commitment to ensuring the welfare of the BDP's historical base.



Khama's leadership style was further characterised by overtures to the urban poor in a way that was at least in effect a response to the urban populism of Kenneth Koma and the mid-1990s BNF. The president in 2009, seemingly in an attempt to "out-populist" Koma's stunt from fifteen years earlier, rode a bicycle around the Old Naledi neighbourhood of Gaborone during the week leading up to the election.<sup>121</sup> While the event drew scorn from those pundits who deemed the president's actions a "populist stunt," it was clear that Khama was seeking to manufacture an image of himself and of the BDP as being sympathetic to the plight of the urban poor.<sup>122</sup> To redouble his claim, Khama repeated the ride one week before

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Mogopodi Lekorwe, Professor of Political Science, University of Botswana, October 20, 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Simon Allison, "Botswana in Crisis: Perspective from a Journalist in Exile," *Mmegi Online*, November 27, 2014, <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=46432>.

<sup>119</sup> Bame Piet and Ntibinyane Ntibinyane, "When Khama Doesn't Care, Even about the US," *Mmegi Online*, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=45059>.

<sup>120</sup> "Botswana: Opposition Gets a Whiff of Power," *The M&G Online*, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-10-24-opposition-gets-a-whiff-of-power/>.

<sup>121</sup> Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*.

<sup>122</sup> John Regonamanye, "Opposition Politicians Rubbish Blankets Donation in Old Naledi," *Sunday Standard*, May 24, 2013,

the 2014 elections.<sup>123</sup> Campaign tactics such as these rallies revealed Khama's intent to brand himself as a leader in touch with Botswana's most vulnerable citizens, be they rural or urban.

This populist leadership style of the new president has been moreover in stark contrast to the "educated, mostly expatriate bureaucratic and technocratic elite" of Mogae and the previous government. The former president, in contrast to Khama, had generally manifested his commitment to fighting poverty by participating in multilateral conferences, such as at the African Union and the United Nations, and "wouldn't be seen mingling with the poor."<sup>124</sup> Khama has generally avoided participation in such forums, preferring to send envoys in his stead.<sup>125</sup> Like his anti-poverty PEPs, including Ipelegeng, which have broadened the scope of the BDP's programmatic efforts to encompass more urban constituents in social protection, Khama's campaign-style tactics have been targeted at a wider range of Botswana, including both urban and rural citizens, with the intention being to counterbalance opposition support among the urban poor.

### Social protection and the 2014 election

The 2014 election featured extensive discussion of social protection approaches and programmes. The Ipelegeng Programme was the target of much scorn from opposition leaders, who decried the president for touting his job creation record when many of the jobs were short-term stints of employment offered through Ipelegeng. Dumelang Saleshando of Gaborone, the BCP's candidate for president, scolded the president for this kind of rhetoric, saying that "Khama through his various States of the Nation addresses refers to Ipelegeng statistics to give an indication of the extent to which his government has created jobs."<sup>126</sup> He went on to say that "while labour intensive public works to alleviate the economic desperation faced by the poor is accepted globally, Ipelegeng is never regarded as a job creation scheme."<sup>127</sup> Critiques of Khama's conflation of Ipelegeng expansion and job creation also emanated from members of the Umbrella for Democratic Change, the BNF-led coalition of opposition parties (save the BCP) that contested the 2014 election. Mohammed Khan, a UDC MP from Molepolole, for one, remarked on the floor of parliament that the government ought rather "to look at how we can get people out of Ipelegeng," adding that the country "should have a President that says to us 'we *reduced* the number of Ipelegeng beneficiaries from 61,000 to 48,000 because we created [private-sector] jobs.'"<sup>128</sup>

---

<http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php/email.php?NewsID=16949><http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php/email.php?NewsID=16949>.

<sup>123</sup> "Incumbent Botswana President Seretse Ian Khama Rides a Bicycle While... News Photo | Getty Images," accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/incumbent-botswana-president-seretse-ian-khama-rides-a-news-photo/457378226>.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Matthew Wright, Bank of Botswana, October 27, 2014.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Bashi Mothusi, PhD, Lecturer, University of Botswana; Bame Piet and Ntibinyane Ntibinyane, "Mmegi Online."

<sup>126</sup> Kenosi Daniel, "BCP Brands Khama a Failure," *The Voice*, July 18, 2014, <http://www.thevoicebw.com/2013/04/05/bcp-brands-khama-a-failure/>.

<sup>127</sup> Kabo Matsapa, "'5 Years of Broken Promises' - Saleshando," *The Tswana Times*, April 3, 2013, [http://www.thetswanatimes.co.bw/news/politics/527-5-years-of-broken-promises-saleshando.html?fb\\_action\\_ids=238103012996908&fb\\_action\\_types=og.likes&fb\\_source=aggregation&fb\\_aggregation\\_id=288381481237582](http://www.thetswanatimes.co.bw/news/politics/527-5-years-of-broken-promises-saleshando.html?fb_action_ids=238103012996908&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_source=aggregation&fb_aggregation_id=288381481237582).

<sup>128</sup> Emphasis is mine. Hansards, National Assembly of Botswana, Hansards, December 2014, <http://www.parliament.gov.bw/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/314/DAILY%20HANSARD%2001%20DECEMBER%202014%20%28MIXED%20VERSION%29%20%282%29.pdf?sequence=1>.



Criticism from opposition politicians also targeted the president for increasing dependency on the state among poor Batswana, many of whom seek out several terms of employment through Ipelegeng, instead of equipping them with skills to earn employment in the private sector. Many in the opposition camp, among whom Ipelegeng has been referred to as *atlhama ke go jese* (“open your mouth and let me feed you”), have dismissed the programme as being more about handouts than empowerment.<sup>129</sup> Statements such as these are in line with the conclusion of a UNICEF programme review that says “Ipelegeng gives people fish without teaching them how to fish.”<sup>130</sup> Other politicians decried the president for channelling the poor into Ipelegeng without a strategy to lift them into true self-reliance. These critics included Duma Boko, Gaborone lawyer and UDC presidential hopeful, who declared at a rally that “when Khama looks at you, he sees herders, Ipelegeng workers. We at the UDC we see among you doctors, engineers, lawyers.”<sup>131</sup> While Khama’s rhetoric suggests an effort to cultivate a brand heavy on job creation for low-income Batswana, the opposition elites sought to degrade Khama’s image by portraying him as being uninterested in real development ends.

For his part ahead of the October election, President Khama worked to strengthen the case he had been making all along that his efforts to increase the productivity of the country were the only sustainable way that the nation’s poor could lift themselves out of poverty. In May 2014, for instance, he announced the National Work Ethic Programme and dedicated “facilitators” to reinforce his public emphasis on increasing the nation’s individual enterprise.<sup>132</sup> In April, the president also (re-)launched the BNSP, which he reported had recruited more than 11,200 participants.<sup>133</sup> He also defended his record around poverty reduction and employment growth. At the party’s 7 April campaign launch, for instance, Khama was reported to have said that he would “not apologise for introducing programmes such as Ipelegeng and Tirelo Sechaba.”<sup>134</sup> Rather, in August 2014, the president announced increases to the remuneration package for Ipelegeng, other PEPs, and the Old-Age Pension.<sup>135</sup> The party’s manifesto, moreover, showcased Ipelegeng as a leading policy achievement of Khama’s presidency and included a promise to “strengthen flagship programmes aimed at poverty eradication” should the party be returned to the government.<sup>136</sup>

Despite spoken criticism of how the BDP was implementing social protection programmes, what the opposition parties offered the country in their manifestos was not much different from the programmes of the Khama-BDP government. The UDC in its manifesto offered an extensive programme with short-term (*A re tsogeng* – “Let’s get to work”) and long-term components (*Iphetlheleng khumo* – “Create your own wealth”) for empowering the poor.<sup>137</sup> The short-term plan, which was designed to “relieve the immediate desperation of our people,” proposed “Employment of vast amounts of labour for our envisaged infrastructure expansion programme,” an increase to the Old-Age Pension, and a

<sup>129</sup> “Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme,” 90.

<sup>130</sup> *Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme*, xx.

<sup>131</sup> Tsaone Basimanebotlhe, “Mmegi Online :: Boko, the Push Rannatshe Needed,” *Mmegi Online*, October 17, 2014, <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=46777>.

<sup>132</sup> Ian Khama, “State-of-the-Nation Address 2014.”

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> “BDP Launches Its General Election Campaign,” *GabzFM*, accessed May 18, 2015, <http://www.gabzfm.com/bdp-launches-its-general-election-campaign>.

<sup>135</sup> Goitsemotimo Williams, “BDP Has Good Record - Khama,” *Botswana Daily News*, August 17, 2014, <http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=13724>.

<sup>136</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 2014

<sup>137</sup> UDC Election manifesto, 2014



tree-planting scheme. The long-term programme featured, among other objectives, a “comprehensive scholarship programme for people living with disabilities.” A final pillar of the UDC’s social protection offerings in 2014 (*Tshegetsang bana* – “Embrace the youth”) included “a solution to the youth unemployment ... [through] new and vast infrastructure project that we intend to implement.” Without deviating significantly from the BDP’s structural approach to social protection, the UDC’s proposals for the country included higher transfer levels and replacements for Khama programmes, which the party claims “rarely concern themselves with lifting our people from poverty permanently or empowering them to find meaningful opportunity in the longer term.”

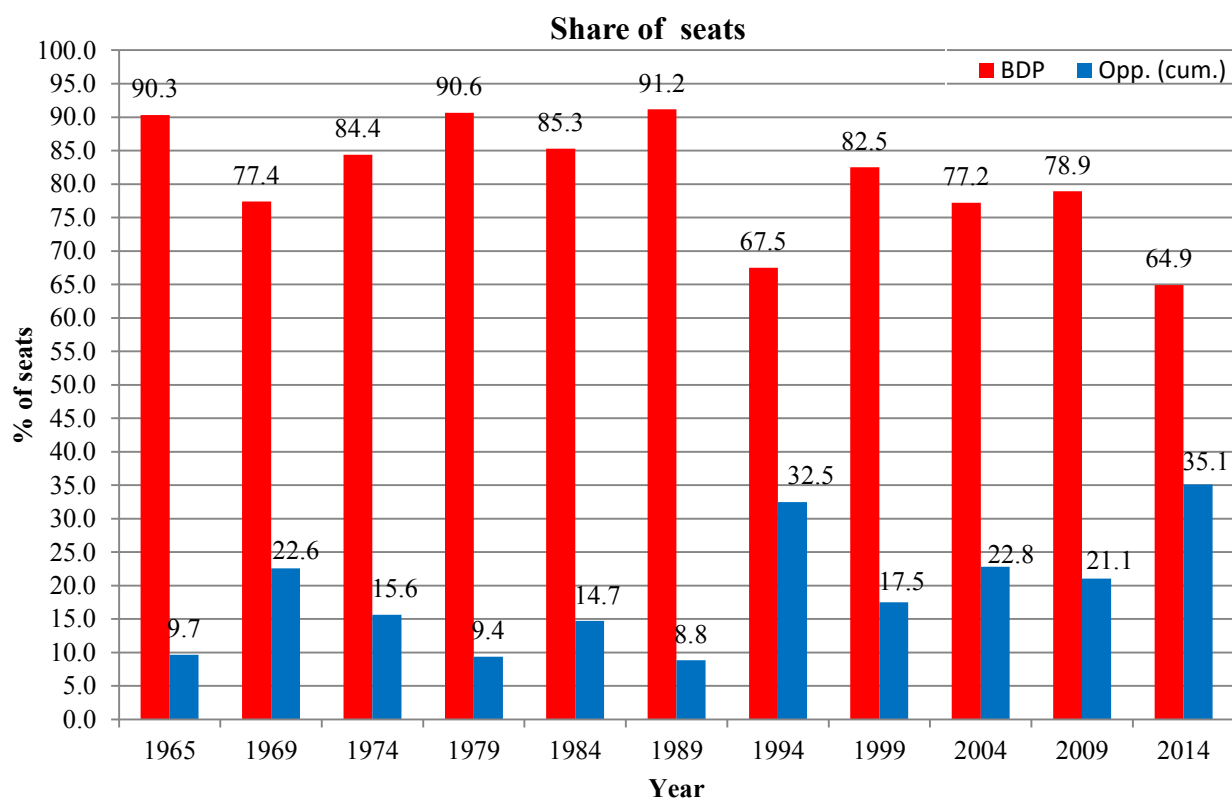
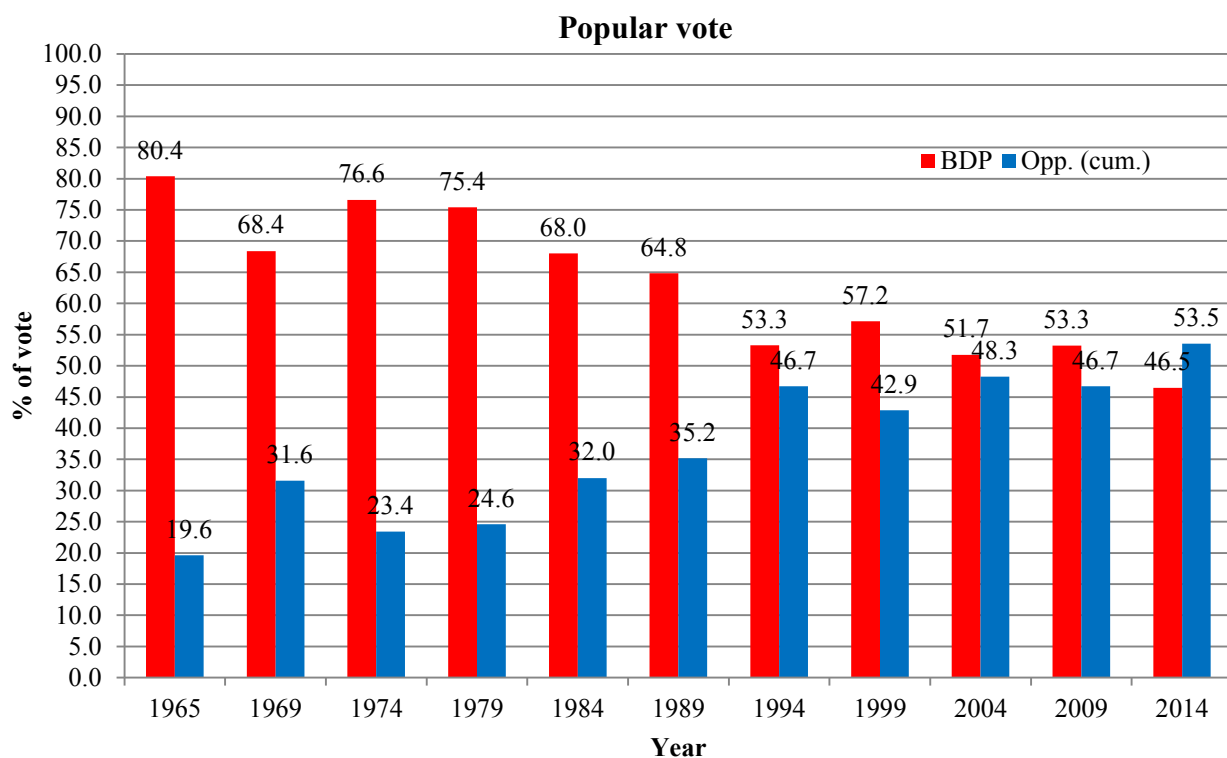
The BCP in its manifesto offered a similar social protection brand to the UDC. In the manifesto’s section on “Protecting the Vulnerable,” the party promised that it would “create economic opportunities for all people who are poor and vulnerable as we believe that the best form of social welfare is work,” suggesting that BDP-style PEPs would be continued.<sup>138</sup> Keorapetse confirmed in 2014 that the BCP would implement a cash-for-work scheme similar to Ipelegeng, but would factor into its programme a greater emphasis on skills development in order to more quickly graduate labourers into private-sector work.<sup>139</sup> Though the party called for government to “reorientate social welfare policies and programmes towards a developmental approach,” there was no strong indication that social protection under the BCP would deviate significantly from the programmes that Khama had already implemented. In short, both opposition camps have consistently over the years striven to craft brands around social protection that are more social-democratic than the BDP’s in order to appeal to the urban working class and rural poor. Yet by 2014, the ruling party had furnished an already comprehensive programme around social protection featuring many of the opposition parties’ ideas.

When the results of the October 2014 election were announced, the BDP had returned a majority of legislators to parliament and Khama to another term as president. However, while the BDP in 2009 had stemmed their party’s trend of electoral decline by winning a 45<sup>th</sup> parliamentary seat (of 57) and increasing their share of the popular vote by two percentage points (53.3%), the party in 2014 fell to its lowest level of electoral popularity yet, coming away with eight fewer seats (37) and a 7-percent decline to less than half of the popular vote (46.5%). Despite their having been denied leadership of the government yet again, opposition parties led by the UDC coalition nearly trebled their seat count to 17 and earned the votes of 30 percent of the electorate. The BCP fell to three seats, though the party increased its popular vote count to 20 percent of the national count.

---

<sup>138</sup> BCP Election manifesto, 2014

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Dithapelo Keorapetse, Member of Parliament (BCP).



Both the ruling and opposition parties thus had reasons to celebrate the results of the election. The BDP earned the right to continue in government for a tenth consecutive term. Following the election, Khama selected as his new vice-president Mokgweetsi Masisi, a former MP who had spearheaded the president's Poverty Eradication Programmes as Minister of Presidential

Affairs.<sup>140</sup> Perhaps another Khama action to reinforce his social protection-focused brand, the choice of Masisi, who is slated to become president automatically on 1 April 2018, reflected a desire by many in the BDP to find a successor who could continue to substantiate the party's commitments to poverty reduction. The UDC in 2014 also achieved a victory of sorts by earning the most seats an opposition party has ever earned in an election, and together with the BCP demonstrated the growing appeal of opposition parties. Failure to topple the BDP, according to one pre-election editorial, would be "not because the opposition has not made inroads or that their manifestoes are not sound, but because the rural electorate ... support the BDP because they rely on social grants."<sup>141</sup> Indeed, Khama and the BDP may have failed to increase their overall support in cities, but by preserving their base of support in a large majority of rural constituencies through the disbursement of social protection, the party demonstrated how it may be able to continue in government for many years to come.

After Khama and the party won a tenth term, the BDP officials announced that the government would be continuing its investment in the poor. The Minister of Finance announced in the February 2015 Budget Address that spending on the Ipelegeng Programme by nearly 10 percent in the coming year to P635.6 million, nearly treble the government's initial expenditure on the programme. This was to be accompanied by spending increases on the Old-Age Pension, Orphan Care Programme, and the Khama-initiated Poverty Eradication Programme, funding for which was proposed to increase 54 percent in 2015-2016.<sup>142</sup> It remains to be seen what the president's youth engagement strategy will be in 2015, though it is expected that BNSP and other youth-targeted programmes will continue. Having earned a tenuous victory in 2014, the BDP leadership appears content for the time-being to continue with its employment-based poverty reduction strategy.

## **Discussion: the potency of PEPs in Botswana**

There are several reasons to believe that Khama's social protection 'brand,' which was fostered by PEPs rebranded to meet stated poverty reduction objectives, has likely helped the BDP to meet some of the political challenges, including drought and migration, that had effected a decline in the party's electoral support since the 1990s. For one, the president's expansion of state welfare offered new lifelines to both urban and rural poor, which in a neopatrimonial fashion likely bolstered support for the BDP. The fact that transfer levels for Ipelegeng (P480 per month) have consistently been higher than for minimum wage jobs in agriculture (P445 per month)—representing an effective raise for the rural working poor—may have further ensured ruling party popularity in rural areas.<sup>143</sup> Perhaps of even greater value to participants though were not so much the transfer levels but the amplified availability of employment itself. In comparing public views on workfare versus cash transfers, Seekings argued that "in general, low-wage job creation is the preferred option of both elites and citizens."<sup>144</sup> Khama's decision to pursue low-wage employment in lieu of a cash transfer scheme (e.g. basic income grant) has likely resonated with this sentiment in Botswana. Indeed, the ability of the 1980s drought relief programme to stimulate support for

<sup>140</sup> "Masisi New Vice-President," *The Ngami Times*, November 2014, <http://www.ngamitimes.com/2014/11/masisi-new-vice-president/?lang=hmn>.

<sup>141</sup> "Botswana."

<sup>142</sup> Finance Ministry, "Botswana: 2015 Budget Speech," *Botswana Daily News (Gaborone)*, By Finance Ministry, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201502031834.html>.

<sup>143</sup> World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," 102. Agricultural minimum wage figure appears on page 82 of the report.

<sup>144</sup> Jeremy Seekings, "Employment Guarantee or Minimum Income? Workfare and Welfare in Developing Countries," January 1, 2006, <http://www.inderscienceonline.com/doi/abs/10.1504/IJEWE.2006.009357>.

the BDP evidences how PEPs have a history of being strongly influential politically in Botswana.

The societal value of paid employment in Botswana, as popular attitudes toward work in neighbouring South Africa suggest, has made low-wage job creation a potentially more politically expedient tactic than cash transfers to mitigate vulnerability. Vulnerable populations in South Africa, for instance, believed that paid work offered recipients dignity in a way that unconditional social grants could not. According to the results of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (2006), which featured 2,939 respondents, 75 percent of respondents disagreed when asked whether they consider themselves better off claiming grants than working.<sup>145</sup> The idea, moreover, that people need to work in order to find dignity permeated the views of most South Africans in the study: 68 percent agreed with the statement that “A person has to have a job to have dignity.”<sup>146</sup> Surender *et al.* (2010), who published based on the study, found that paid employment was highly valued by respondents both in and out of work.<sup>147</sup> Nattrass (2003) noted further how pursuing the “dignity of work” for poor South Africans was, as a result of this prevailing social value, an important consideration for political elites.<sup>148</sup>

The cultivation of a sense of personal dignity was also a part of Khama’s stated intentions with regard to his PEPs. To the extent Khama’s programmes achieved dignity for their beneficiaries—according to one survey of Ipelegeng labourers, 85 percent of respondents agreed that the programme had given them some dignity—the president therefore stood to gain politically from this group.<sup>149</sup> As one Ipelegeng labourer noted, the programme “has brought dignity, a sense of self-worth and independence to us because like everyone else we can go to the shops and buy ourselves food.”<sup>150</sup> Cash transfer programmes, by comparison, may not foster dignity to the same degree as PEPs, especially for able-bodied adults. According to the FAO’s review of cash-for-work programmes in Somalia, “there is an intrinsic value and sense of dignity that is derived from households earning income from their own hard work and sweat that cannot be provided through unconditional cash transfers.”<sup>151</sup>

Khama’s decision to make low-wage work the hallmark of his social protection agenda therefore fostered the greatest degree of dignity possible for beneficiaries, as compared to other welfare strategies he could have pursued. For a president who made Dignity one of the five themes of his presidency, moreover, and claimed that his “development goal is to ultimately ensure the dignity of all citizens ... through productive excellence,” implementing PEPs was likely the most politically expedient strategy to boosting the dignity of poor Botswana.

---

<sup>145</sup> Rebecca Surender et al., “Social Assistance and Dependency in South Africa: An Analysis of Attitudes to Paid Work and Social Grants,” *Journal of Social Policy* 39, no. 02 (April 2010): 203–21, doi:10.1017/S0047279409990638.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Nicoli Nattrass, “The state of the economy: A crisis of employment” in John Daniel, Adam Habib, and Roger Southall, *State of the Nation: South Africa, 2003-2004* (HSRC Press, 2003), 151.

<sup>149</sup> The rate was 90 percent among rural respondents. “Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme,” 93.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>151</sup> Maham Farhat, Andrew Kardan, and Mohamed Gure, “Review of FAO Cash For Work Programme in Somalia,” 2014, 34.

Evidence suggesting that Khama's programmes have become personalised to the point of being associated more with him than with government has likely also motivated political support for the president among Botswana's poor. "Observers argue," noted one journalist, "that the personalisation of the government schemes is a deliberate effort by the President and his supporters to make him bigger than the institutions he works under and hence portray him as indispensable."<sup>152</sup> Whether or not Khama intended this personalisation as an outcome of his programmatic agenda is a matter for debate, but in any case the effect has been the same: with the existence of popular programmes such as Ipelegeng perceived to be contingent on Khama's leadership, it stands to reason that supporters of the *mananeo a ga Rara*—most notably the beneficiaries—would offer their support to the president in order to keep him, and by extension his programmes, in office. This contingency, and strong approbation for Khama's programme generally among recipients, has given pause to opposition politicians who might have otherwise criticised Khama's PEPs. The BCP's Keorapetse, for instance, complained that "as soon as you mention the idea of taking away Ipelegeng that they [beneficiaries] depend on, people get upset, even if you only want to replace it with something better."<sup>153</sup> Had the same PEPs been institutionalised as programmes of the government (à la drought relief in 1991) and not of the president himself, political support for Khama among beneficiaries may have been less certain.

Clearly, the Khama brand, as manifested through his social protection schemes, has boosted support for the party among programme beneficiaries and most especially the rural poor. What is less clear, however, is the effect that the president's brand management has had in appealing to Batswana who were not recipients of recent state social protection programmes. On the one hand, Khama's took sweeping action on his self-assigned mandate to create jobs and reduce poverty. On the other hand, the high degree of dependency that low-wage workers in BDP employment programmes experience suggests how the president fostered a clientelistic strategy aimed at increasing electoral support among specific groups. These ends, of course, may not be mutually exclusive. More information about how Batswana perceive Khama's development strategy would first be needed in order to determine what effect they may have had in bolstering support for the president and the party. Absent survey data focused specifically on the president's PEPs, data from the Afrobarometer survey in Botswana could offer some insights into the effectiveness of the Khama political brand to generate support among the broader electorate.<sup>154</sup>



<sup>152</sup> Edward Bule, "Will Khama Retire at the End of His Term?"

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Dithapelo Keorapetse, Member of Parliament (BCP).

<sup>154</sup> Photograph from Leungo Rakgati, "Explore Other Projects," *Botswana Daily News*, June 23, 2013, <http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=3641>.

## Data Analysis

The foregoing chapter evidences the claim that President Ian Khama and other political elites engage in practices of social protection branding in a way that can advance their political goals. Whether these political elites do in fact achieve these political goals through social protection branding hinges on how the prospective electorate perceives them and their efforts. In attempting to gauge the salience of social protection branding in Botswana's elections then, one might look to opinion data for insights into how the social protection-related ideas and efforts of political elites are regarded by the general public. To attempt to gauge the salience of the Khama social protection brand in the 2014 election, this analysis relies on Afrobarometer (AB) surveys recorded in Botswana. A better understanding of these data could offer insights into whether President Ian Khama's branding around social protection galvanised support for the BDP and his own candidacy ahead of the 2014 election.

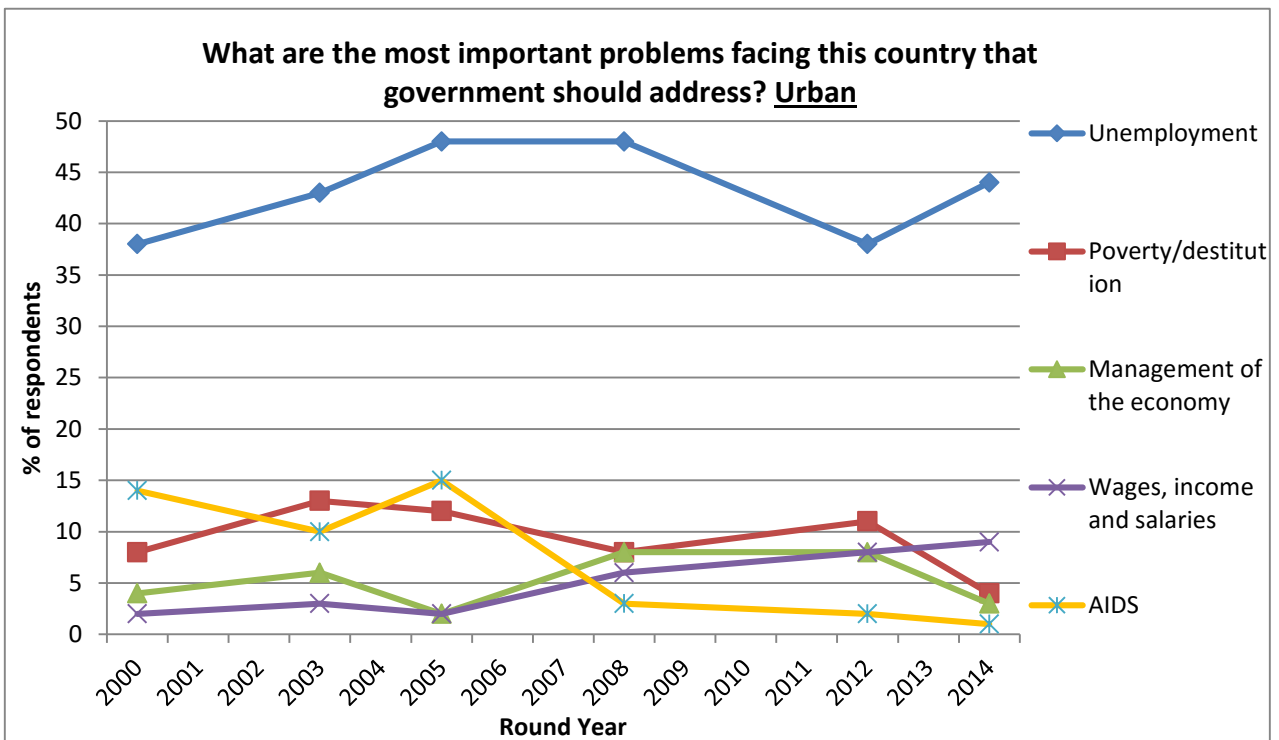
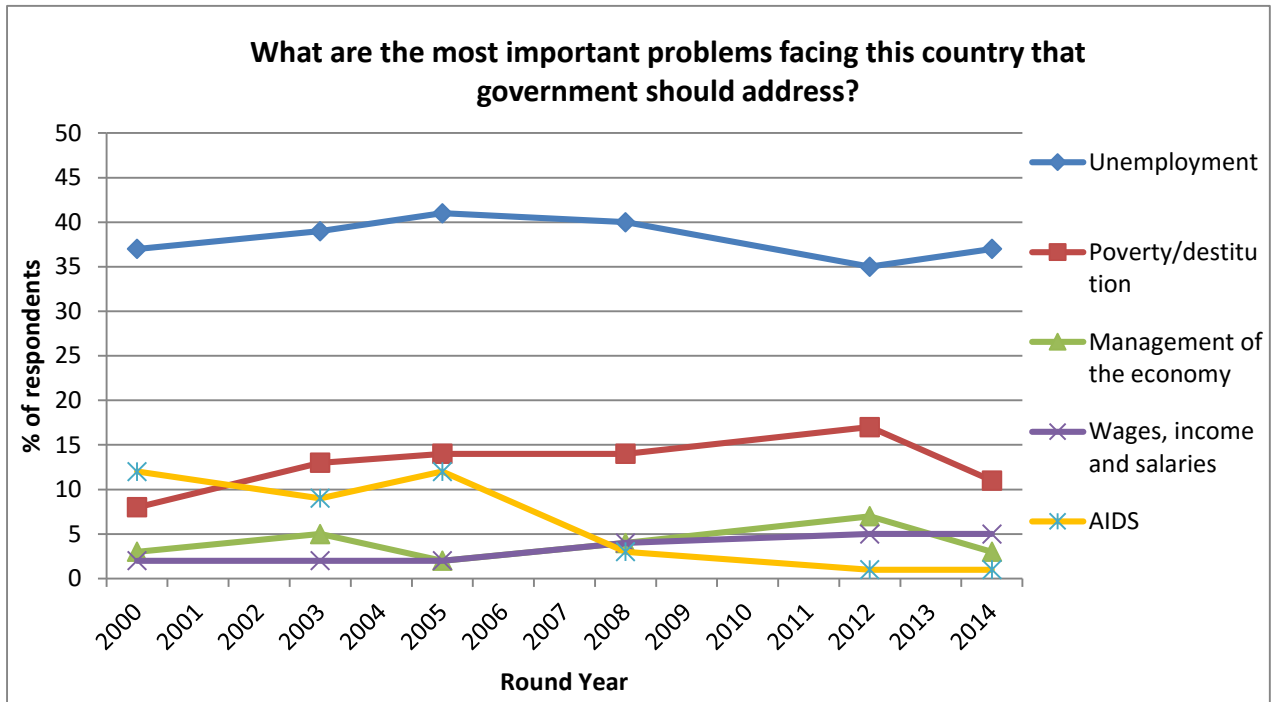
I argue in the foregoing chapter that Khama has striven to make his several employment-centred poverty reduction programmes a hallmark of his social policy agenda and his presidency more generally. These programmes were leveraged in such a way that the president could potentially energise a weary BDP political base of rural poor voters as well as regain support from the country's growing urban population that as provided increasing support for the opposition over the past two decades. The hypothesis is that if particular societal problems (e.g. poverty) are salient to voters in an election, then the incumbent's efforts to project a particular brand that is responsive to these perceived problems will be influential in determining electoral support for the incumbent and his party. By analysing survey data in the context of Khama's efforts to furnish poverty-targeted employment programmes, it may be possible to evaluate the effectiveness of his social protection brand to increase electoral support for the BDP.<sup>155</sup>

### Appraisal of socioeconomic indicators

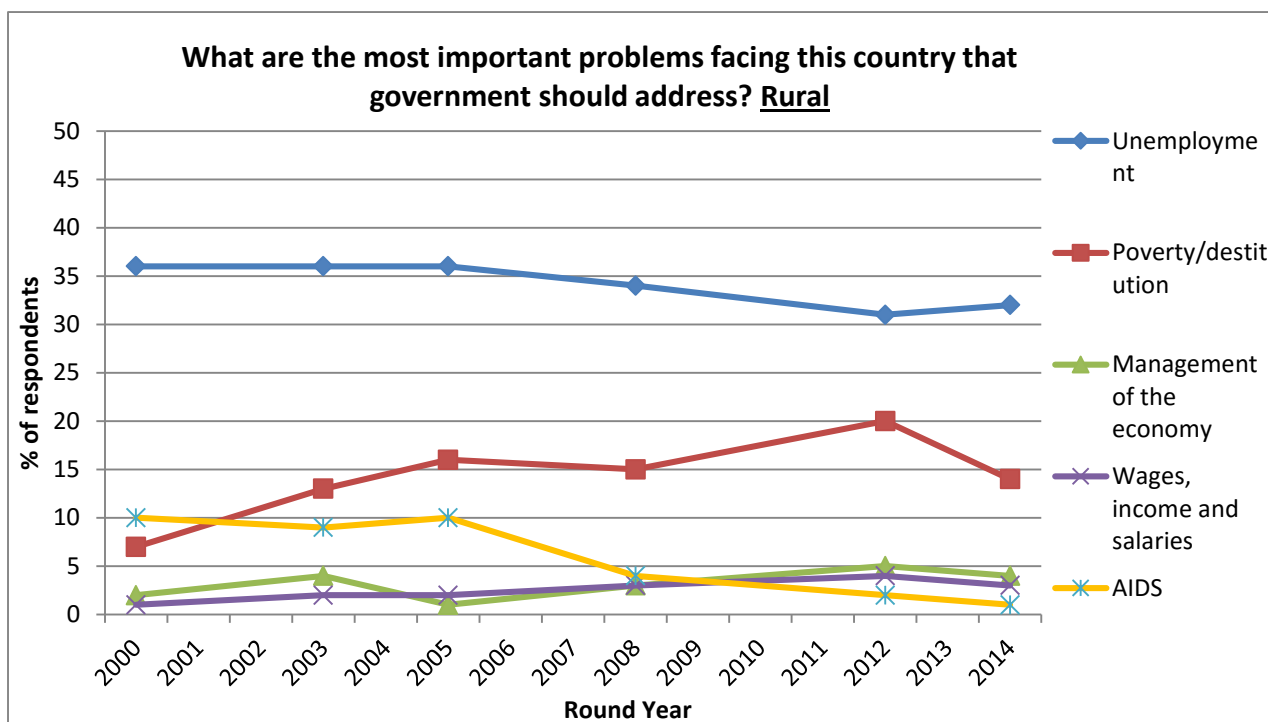
Throughout most of the past fifteen years, the two societal problems that the AB survey data indicate most Botswana consider to be the most important problems government should address are Unemployment and Poverty/destitution [see below]. Unemployment, uniquely, has been the most important problem for a large plurality of Botswana across all inhabitancy groups—urban, semi-urban, and rural cohorts. Urban residents, more so, have emphasised unemployment as compared to other cohorts, while relatively more rural inhabitants considered poverty to be a more pressing issue. But with these two issues nonetheless comprising the two primary concerns of Botswana in recent years, there is reason to believe that the Khama social protection brand—which has been centred on poverty eradication through employment for able-bodied but vulnerable citizens—would be electorally salient.

---

<sup>155</sup> There are potential hazards that could undermine the strength of analyses based on survey data. According to Dulani (2010), major challenges to reliability in the case of the Afrobarometer surveys include the fact that there has been a "paucity of social science quantitative research capacity" to produce comprehensive surveys. "Anti-colonial movements and ensuing post-independence governments" have also "left a range of political legacies that ... shrink the space for independent and open intellectual inquiry." Though these factors should not be discounted, data from Afrobarometer offer a relatively honest window—especially in the relatively open society that is Botswana—into the mindset of prospective voters. Boniface Dulani, "The Afrobarometer at 10: Opportunities and Challenges of Building a Network of Survey Research in Africa" (IASSIST 2010 Conference, Cornell University, June 2010).



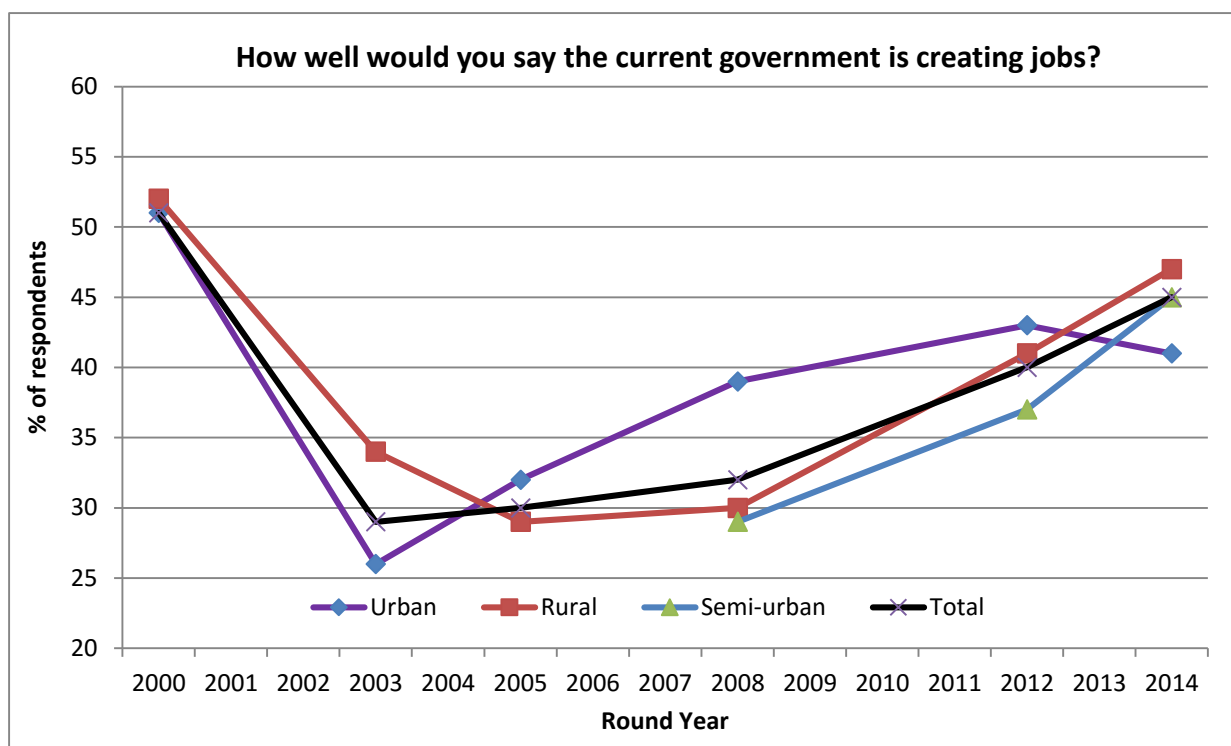




Indeed, there has been a correlation in the rise of popular approval for government's efforts to (1) create jobs and (2) improve living standards for the poor, with the timeline of implementation for Khama's flagship poverty eradication programme, Ipelegeng. In 2012, for instance, 40 percent of all survey respondents stated that government was doing "fairly well" or "very well" at creating jobs, compared with 32 percent of respondents in 2008, the year that Khama became president.<sup>156</sup> The government of former president Festus Mogae (1998-2008), by comparison, had fared poorly with a general decline in satisfaction especially among rural respondents for his government's job creation efforts (from 51% approving in 2000 to 32% in 2005). The consistent rise in approval for the Khama government's efforts to create jobs between 2008 and 2014 was particularly strong among rural respondents. Only 30 percent of rural respondents had approved of the government's efforts at the start of the Khama presidency, but 47 percent approved by the time his first term was reaching its conclusion (2014). Among urban respondents, however, approval for the government's job creation efforts on the net hovered around 40 percent between 2008 and 2014. These combined observations of rural and urban approval ratings suggest that Khama's efforts to spur job creation, especially through public employment programmes, likely improved his standing among rural Batswana only.<sup>157</sup>

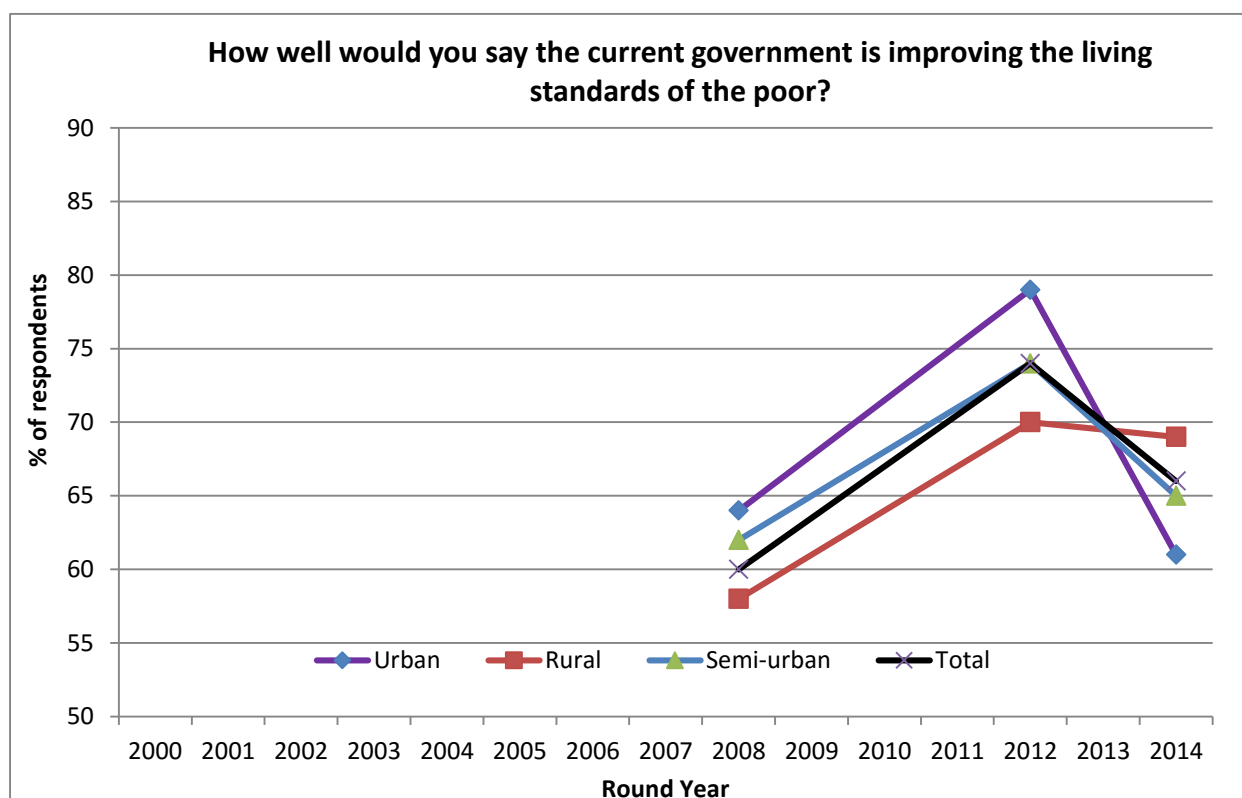
<sup>156</sup> The Ipelegeng Programme was introduced in April 2009.

<sup>157</sup> Job creation under Khama was of course not limited to his public employment programmes. However, the immediate creation of about 55,000 positions through the Ipelegeng Programme in 2009, which represented about 10% of all formal-sector jobs, was undoubtedly the most significant employment-creation event to take place during the Khama presidency. The percentage of Ipelegeng jobs as a percentage of overall jobs, moreover, increased between September 2009 and September 2011 (Statistics Botswana), from a low of 8.7 percent in December 2009 to a high of 13.5 percent in September 2011. National employment grew consistently during this period at an average rate of 1,155 new jobs per month. There are no data available on Ipelegeng employment creation after 2012, though the rate of programmatic expenditure continued to increase sharply.



After ‘Unemployment,’ the societal challenge that AB respondents have most often chosen as the foremost problem facing Botswana that government should address is ‘Poverty/destitution.’ Through the Ipelegeng Programme and various other poverty eradication schemes, Khama’s government has over the past half-decade made poverty reduction the focus of the president’s social policy. Programmes that this president has introduced, which in rural and remote areas have often been the only available sources of income, have accompanied a steep rise in approval among rural dwellers for the government’s efforts to “improve the living standards of the poor.”<sup>158</sup> While rural respondents (among all respondent groups) expressed the lowest approval for the government’s job creation efforts in 2008 (58%), by 2014 the rural cohort approved at a higher rate (69%) than any other group. Urban respondents, despite a curious 15-point rise in approval rate (perhaps owing to recovery from the Financial Crisis of 2007-2008), decreased their approval for the government’s efforts to the lowest rate (61%) by 2014 among the three inhabitancy cohorts. These observations suggest how the Khama government’s efforts to eradicate poverty were appealing rural respondents, while urban respondents by 2014 were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with government.

<sup>158</sup> “Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme,” June 2012, 79, [http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana\\_2012-004\\_Final\\_Ipelegeng.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana_2012-004_Final_Ipelegeng.pdf).



### Ipelegeng Programme review

Participant surveys from a 2012 review of the Ipelegeng Programme corroborate some of these trends in public opinion data from the Afrobarometer survey. Specifically, variable reviews from rural and urban labourers can help to explain differential ratings in approval between urban and rural respondents in the AB surveys. The review noted that, on the whole, residents of urban areas “have shown a higher percentage of Ipelegeng participants who can only afford to buy food with their Ipelegeng wages.” This remark indicates that Ipelegeng, which disbursed wages to labourers irrespective of costs of living, may not have had as strong of an effect in convincing urban AB survey respondents that the government was doing a satisfactory job in increasing living standards for the poor.<sup>159</sup> The fact that ‘Wages, income and salaries’ in 2014 overtook ‘Poverty/destitution’ as the second-most-chosen national problem that government should address (after ‘Unemployment’) among urban respondents could also be a result of this programmatic deficiency. It may well be the case that urban AB respondents, whether or not they participated in Ipelegeng, viewed the president’s offer of low wages as being insufficient to meet the relative expense of urban living.

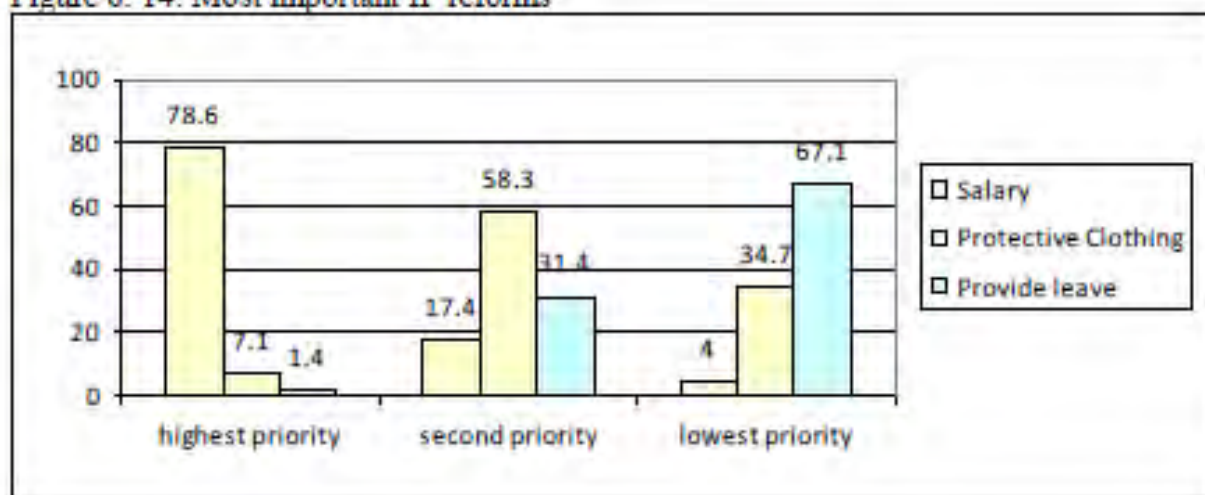
For rural dwellers by comparison, a monthly wage of R480 (plus a daily meal) has had greater value than the same wage in an urban area where “high participation costs such as transport and payment of rentals which most likely leave the beneficiaries with a limited residual wage.”<sup>160</sup> While all AB survey cohorts concurred that the Khama government was doing better at creating jobs and improving living standards for the poor between 2008 and 2012, rural respondents no doubt faced fewer barriers to improving their living conditions

<sup>159</sup> *Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme*, June 2012, [http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana\\_2012-004\\_Final\\_Ipelegeng.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana_2012-004_Final_Ipelegeng.pdf), xx.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

where costs are lower and employment opportunities fewer than in cities. (The ratio of rural-to-urban Ipelegeng labourers was about 2-to-1.<sup>161</sup>) However, it seems that for participating Batswana, low wages have consistently been a “major complaint expressed by almost all the respondents.” This observation corroborates the fact that a large majority (78.6%) of respondents listed ‘Salary’ as the most important aspect of Ipelegeng they believed needed reforming. This factor may have limited the appeal of the Khama brand, though most especially in urban areas.<sup>162</sup>

Figure 6. 14: Most important IP reforms



### Approval for Khama and the BDP; comparing Khama and Mogae

With unemployment and poverty occupying the two most-pressing problems for a plurality of AB survey respondents, it would be reasonable to ascribe the Khama government’s success (or failure) at creating jobs and reducing poverty as the most important inputs in determining the president’s overall approval rating. During Khama’s time in office, the president’s approval rating among urban dwellers dipped from a high of 89 percent at the start of his term in 2008 to 71 percent by 2014.<sup>163</sup> By comparison, support for the president among rural dwellers fell by only 4 points (89 to 85%) and among semi-urban dwellers by 6 points (85 to 79%). Since 2012, the president’s approval rating among rural and semi-urban inhabitants increased, while approval from urban respondents decreased significantly. These

<sup>161</sup> World Bank, “Botswana Social Protection Assessment,” December 2013, 28, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/17846>.

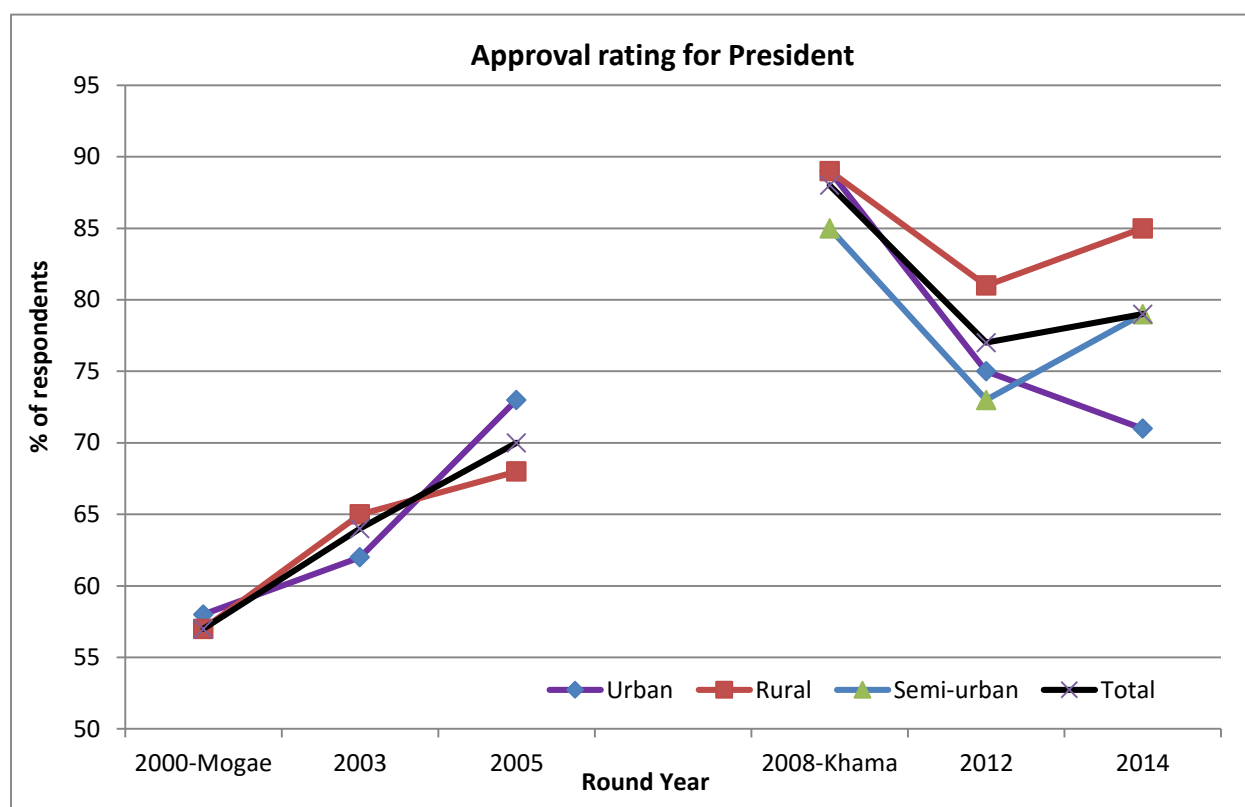
<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 83, 90.

<sup>163</sup> It should be noted that the Round 4 (2008) AB survey data were recorded less than eight months after the succession of Khama to the presidency. The fact that Khama enjoyed a particularly high approval rate of 88 percent across all cohorts should be attributed in part to the novelty of his presidency—no doubt reinforced by his familial connection to the former president—and not necessarily a product of his leadership. By comparison, Joyce Banda of Malawi enjoyed extraordinarily high approval ratings during the opening months of her presidency. This phenomenon has moreover been observed in geographical contexts across the world. In the American context:

From a high point on inauguration day, support declines for much but not all of the term. This decay function can be seen as common to all presidents, once other effects are controlled. The pattern supports the idea also advanced by Norpoth (1984) that approval is artificially inflated to start with, presumably through electoral and inaugural festivities and the hopes aroused for the president's new term.

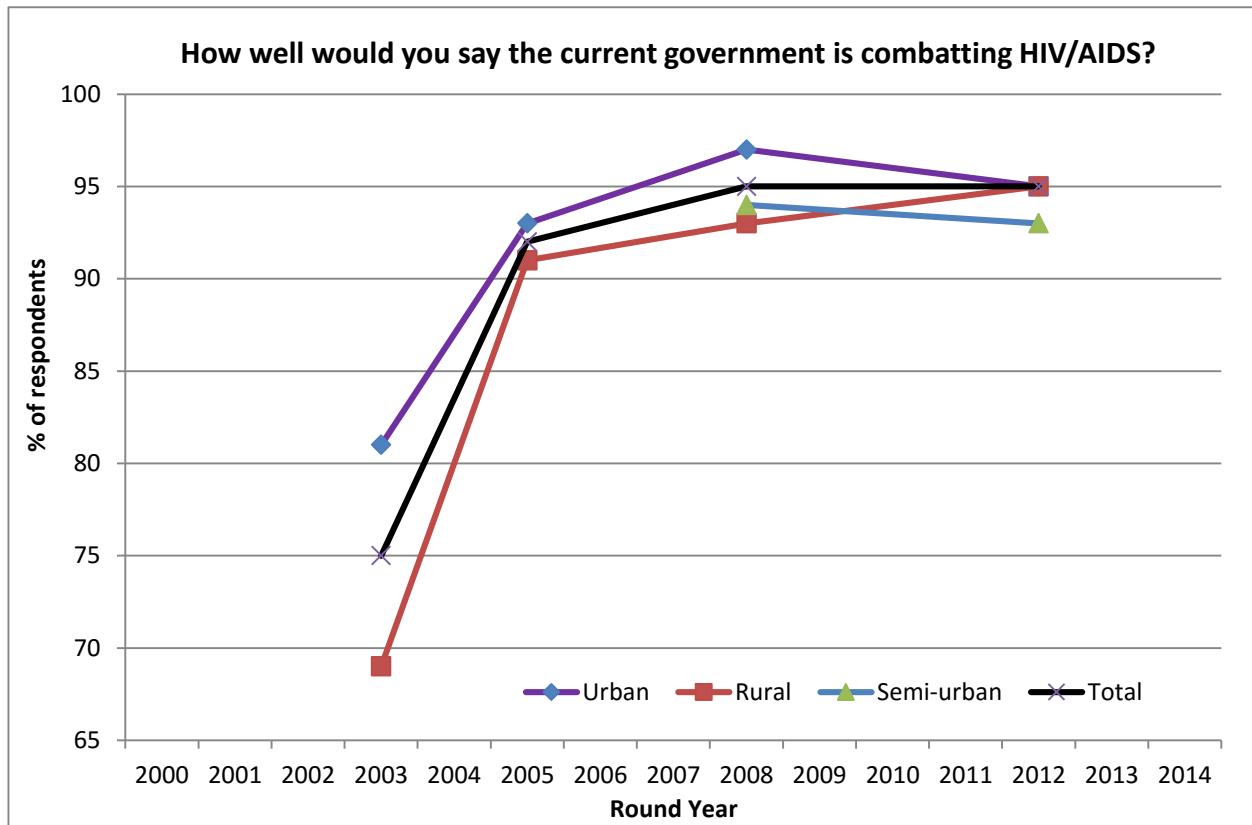
Cit.: Paul Brace and Barbara Hinckley, “The Structure of Presidential Approval: Constraints within and across Presidencies,” *The Journal of Politics* 53, no. 4 (November 1, 1991): 1012, doi:10.2307/2131864.

differential changes, in the context of unemployment and poverty being important societal challenges, suggest that the president performed relatively better at spurring job growth and/or reducing lived poverty according to rural and semi-urban Batswana than to urban Batswana. Since an important mechanism through which the president pursued job growth and poverty reduction goals was his expansive public works programmes, Khama's overall approval rating was in no small part a function of his employment programmes.



The Mogae presidency, by comparison, elicited approval ratings that were on the whole at least 7 points (and as many as 31 points) lower than Khama's approval ratings, suggesting that the former president did not achieve the same degree of success as Khama has on salient issues. A principal focus of the Mogae presidency, to a greater degree than any other Botswanan president, was HIV/AIDS eradication. Mogae did perform satisfactorily, according to most AB respondents: between 2003 and 2005, Mogae's government received a 22-point increase (70 to 92%) of people who approved of the government's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. This increase was undoubtedly a function of the government's 2004 introduction of routine HIV testing and universal provision of ARVs to which it contributed US\$340 million. The government's response to the AIDS epidemic in Botswana also precipitated a sharp decline from 2005 to 2008 in the percentage of AB respondents who believed 'AIDS' was the most important challenge for government to address (12 to 3%). The success of Mogae's AIDS eradication efforts, which earned him international acclaim, was probably a factor in increasing the president's approval rating between 2003 and 2005. This boost in approval was especially strong among urban dwellers, likely due to the far greater prevalence of the disease in Botswana's cities.<sup>164</sup>

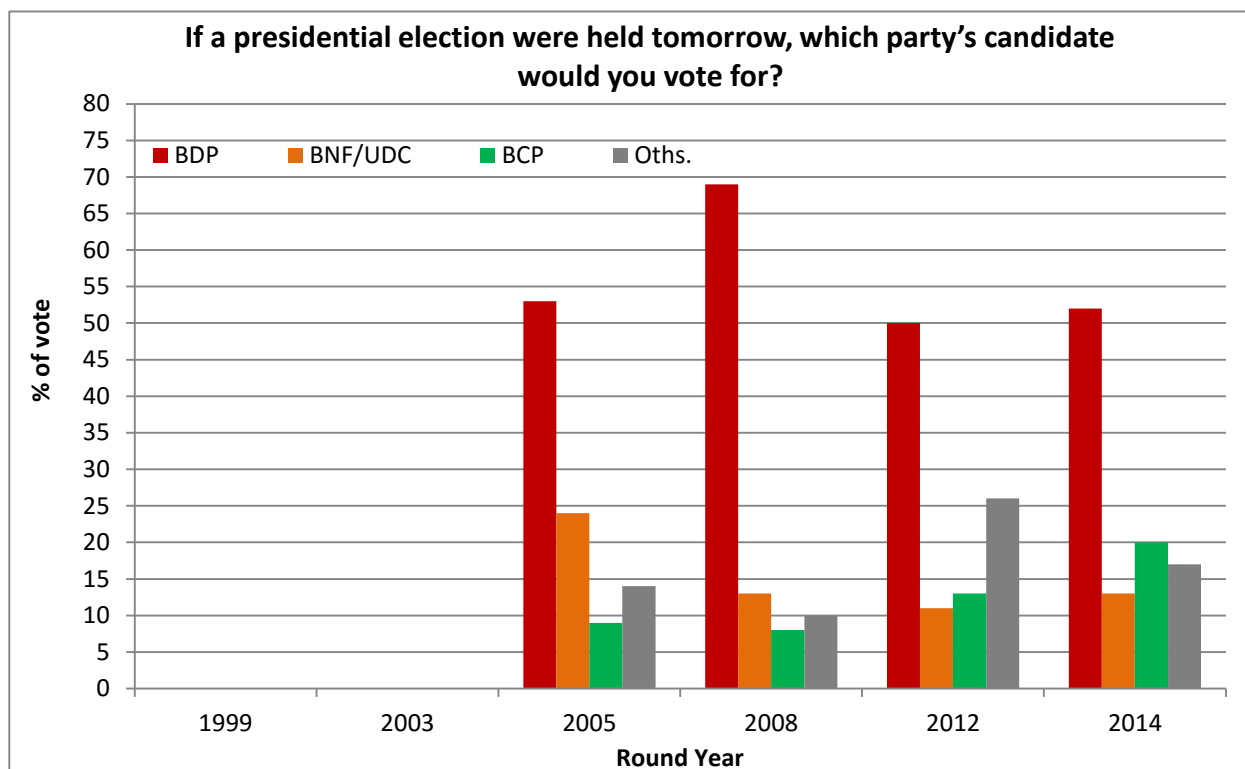
<sup>164</sup> Ngianga-Bakwin Kandala et al., "The Geography of HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rates in Botswana," *HIV/AIDS (Auckland, N.Z.)* 4 (July 18, 2012): 95–102, doi:10.2147/HIV.S30537.

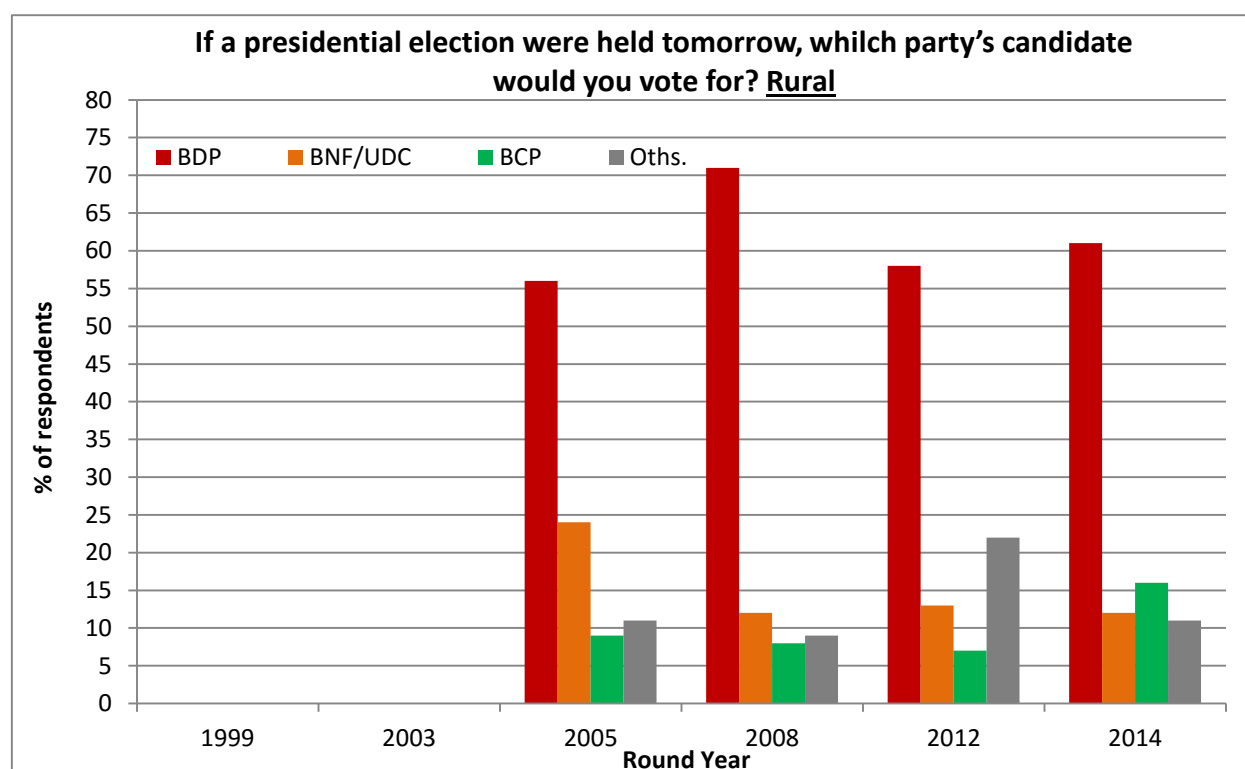
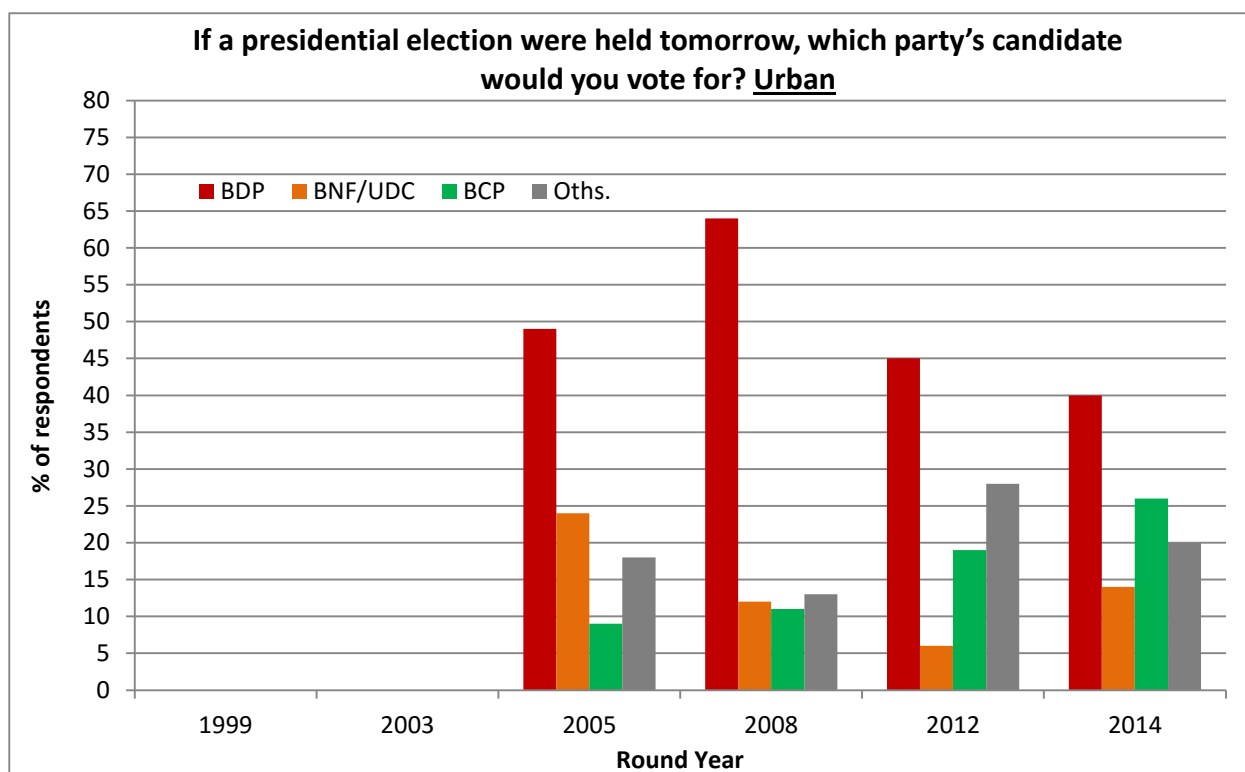


Despite strengthened approval for Mogae by 2005, his approval rating never exceeded that of his successor, Khama (except among urban respondents in 2005). This may have had to do with the fact that AIDS was not a highly salient issue to most respondents as compared to the issues of unemployment and poverty reduction, around which Khama centred his political brand. Mogae, by contrast, did not implement any new employment-oriented poverty reduction schemes that had that might have characterised his political brand differently. These respective branding choices suggest that Khama was able to sustain a high approval rating because his programmatic focus was better tailored to the contemporary concerns of most Batswana (i.e., unemployment and poverty) than were the health programmes that predominantly characterised Mogae's agenda.

### Support for the BDP

Trends in approval for Khama's job as president were highly correlated with support for the BDP as a whole, according to AB respondents. Given the personalised character of public programmes around Khama (as opposed to government generally), as was elucidated in the main chapter of this dissertation, this is not a surprise finding. When asked which party they would vote for if an election were held tomorrow, 61 percent said that they would vote for the BDP, an increase of 3 points from 2012 (58%). When disaggregating by inhabitancy type, semi-urban and rural respondents increased their support for the BDP significantly, while urban respondents recorded a 5-point decline in support (45 to 40%). Khama's programmatic agenda, which provided greater relative outcomes to non-urban Batswana, likely accounts for this differential.





Though support for the BDP waned among across cohorts after 2008, the year that Khama began his presidency, support for the BDP fell the fewest percentage points from 2008 to 2012 among rural respondents (-13) as compared to urban (-19) and semi-urban (-24; not shown) cohorts. As with the president's approval rating, trends in support for a particular political party cannot easily be ascribed to a particular presidential programme or even the president's broader social policy agenda. Yet one could infer with some confidence from



these data that, given the strong salience of ‘Unemployment’ and ‘Poverty/destitution’ in Botswana, that the president’s public works programmes have afforded the BDP a strengthened base of support among rural Batswana for whom Ipelegeng and similar programmes were the only sources of employment. Urban Batswana, who did not derive as many benefits from Khama’s social protection programmes as compared to rural inhabitants, perhaps for this reason did not as readily give the president or the BDP their support.

### **The role of government and the means of social protection – Part I**

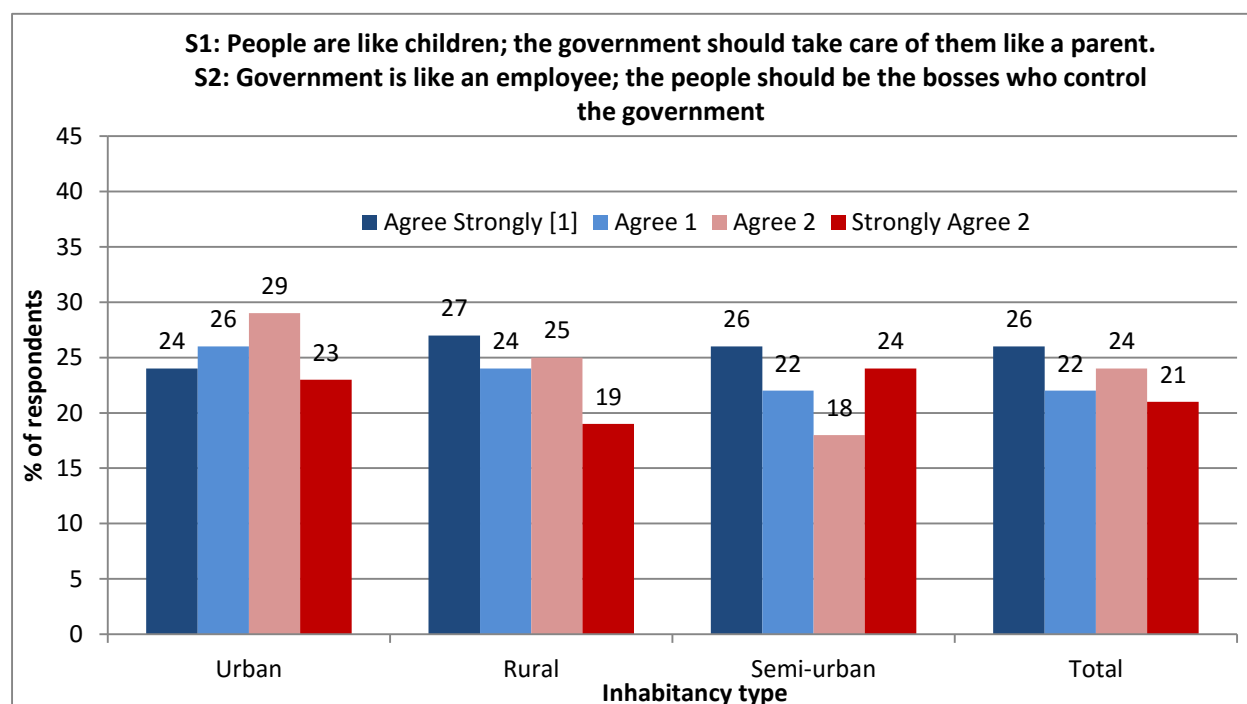
If government and the political elites who run them can deliver results on issues of the highest salience to voters, then they stand to enjoy maximum support from the populace. This was the observation that the previous section served to evidence in the context of Khama and his programmatic agenda vis-à-vis social protection. A concurrent hypothesis is that government officials in order to earn popular support must not only obey the ends-oriented desires of the populace—e.g., a reduction to the poverty rate—but must also fulfil the nation’s means-oriented wishes—in other words, *how* the government goes about reducing poverty. The way in which government officials go about achieving a particular social protection policy end, according to Devereux (2011), can be influential in shaping public opinion of policies and the political elites who sponsor them.<sup>165</sup> Unconditional transfers to vulnerable populations, for instance, depending on how they are distributed might be considered to be politically motivated “handouts” or critical tools of poverty alleviation. Depending on the cultural context in which social protection is sought, therefore, the mechanisms of welfare distribution can be important in influencing how the political parties and elites providing the support are regarded.

The AB survey data can offer insights into how Khama’s behaviour in pursuance of a “compassionate and caring society” might have shifted public opinion in his favour. Specifically, the 2008 survey asks respondents to select the one statement that best captures their view of how government should operate. Respondents could choose [1] “People are like children; the government should take care of them like a parent” or (2) “Government is like an employee; the people should be the bosses who control the government.” The first statement reflects a more paternalistic vision for government whereby elites are tasked with providing moral guidance and ensuring the welfare of the people, most especially the poor. The second statement reflects a more activist role for citizens in which the general public lobbies government to pursue its collective vision. The prominence of one response choice over the other holds potentially significant implications for whether the Khama government has fulfilled the expectations of the voters.

---

<sup>165</sup> Stephen Devereux, “Social Protection: From Handouts to Social Justice | Stephen Devereux,” *The Guardian*, accessed May 8, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/may/17/social-protection-handouts-social-justice>.

If voters expect government to take care of them (i.e., Statement 1), government's success or failure to meet that expectation could influence how voters regard government and political leaders, with ultimate consequences for electoral outcomes. Responses in the 2008 survey revealed a slight bias among rural dwellers in favour of Statement 1.<sup>166</sup> In 2008, a slight majority of respondents inhabiting rural areas (51%) agreed with Statement 1, compared to 44 percent who agreed with Statement 2. Urban dwellers exhibited a converse belief pattern: 52 percent likened government to an employee, whereas 40 percent considered government's role to be like a parent. (A slight plurality of semi-urban dwellers at 45 percent chose the 'parent' analogy statement.)

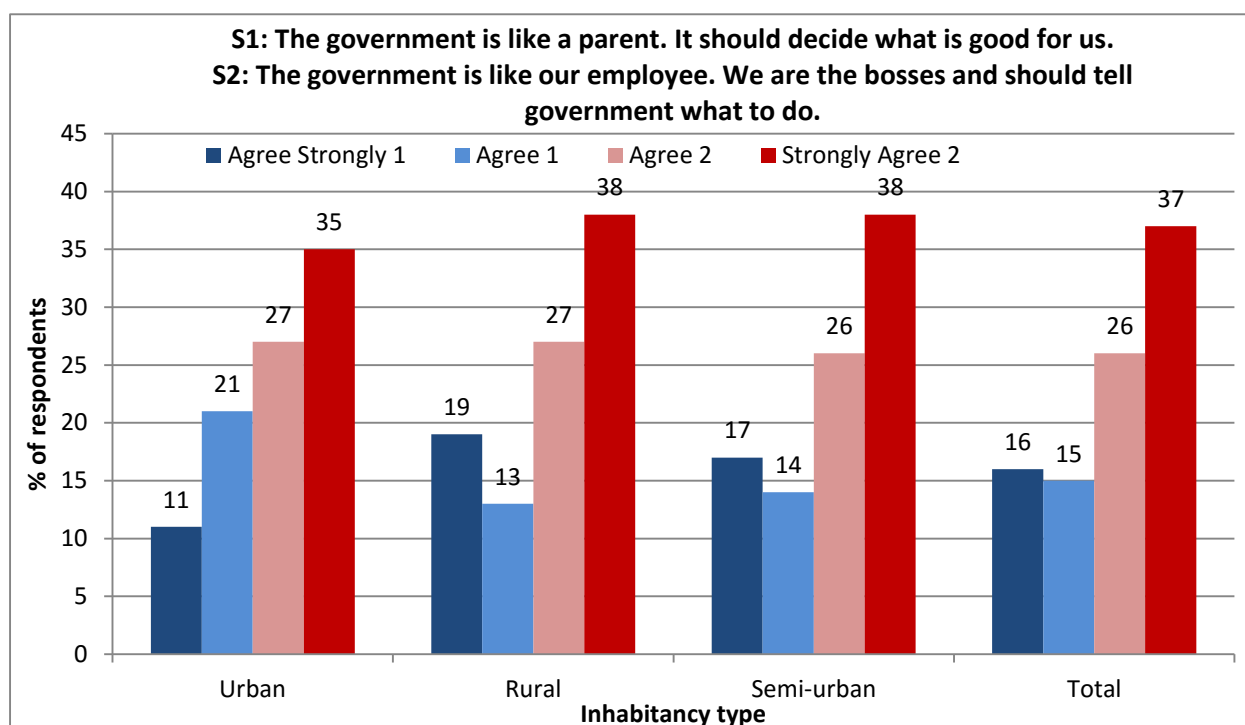


Given how Khama marketed his social protection policies to Batswana—i.e., in a way that elicited description of his agenda as “Our Father’s programmes”—the president likely fulfilled the expectations of those respondents who agreed with Statement 1. Khama’s frequent visits to impoverished areas around the country to tout his programmes have resulted in their becoming personalised to his presidency, more than merely government programmes. Unlike his more technocratic predecessor Mogae, Khama has striven to have people regard him as “caring and compassionate,” much as a parent would be. The president’s further distribution of food, radios, blankets, and more to vulnerable Batswana likely furthered his support among survey respondents who regard government as being primarily responsible for “taking care of them like a parent.” Conversely, those who agreed with Statement 2, including a majority of urban respondents, might have taken umbrage with the way in which Khama aggressively pushed his employment programmes without much (documented) consultation from the people.

<sup>166</sup> The question was not asked again in subsequent survey rounds.

## The role of government and the means of social protection – Part II

A similar question soliciting normative views on the role of government was posed to respondents in 2012. Respondents were asked to choose which normative view of government best matched their views: (1) “The government is like a parent. It should decide what is good for us; or (2) “The government is like our employee. We are the bosses and should tell government what to do.”<sup>167</sup> In response to this question, there was strong consensus across all inhabitancy groups that the government is like an employee (between 62 and 65% of respondents in each category). This result suggests that a majority of Batswana would have government leaders consult the citizenry in how to best serve the needs of the nation, rather than have them determine unilaterally how to improve the country. Here again, the way in which social protection programmes are implemented could influence the way in which government and political elites are viewed.



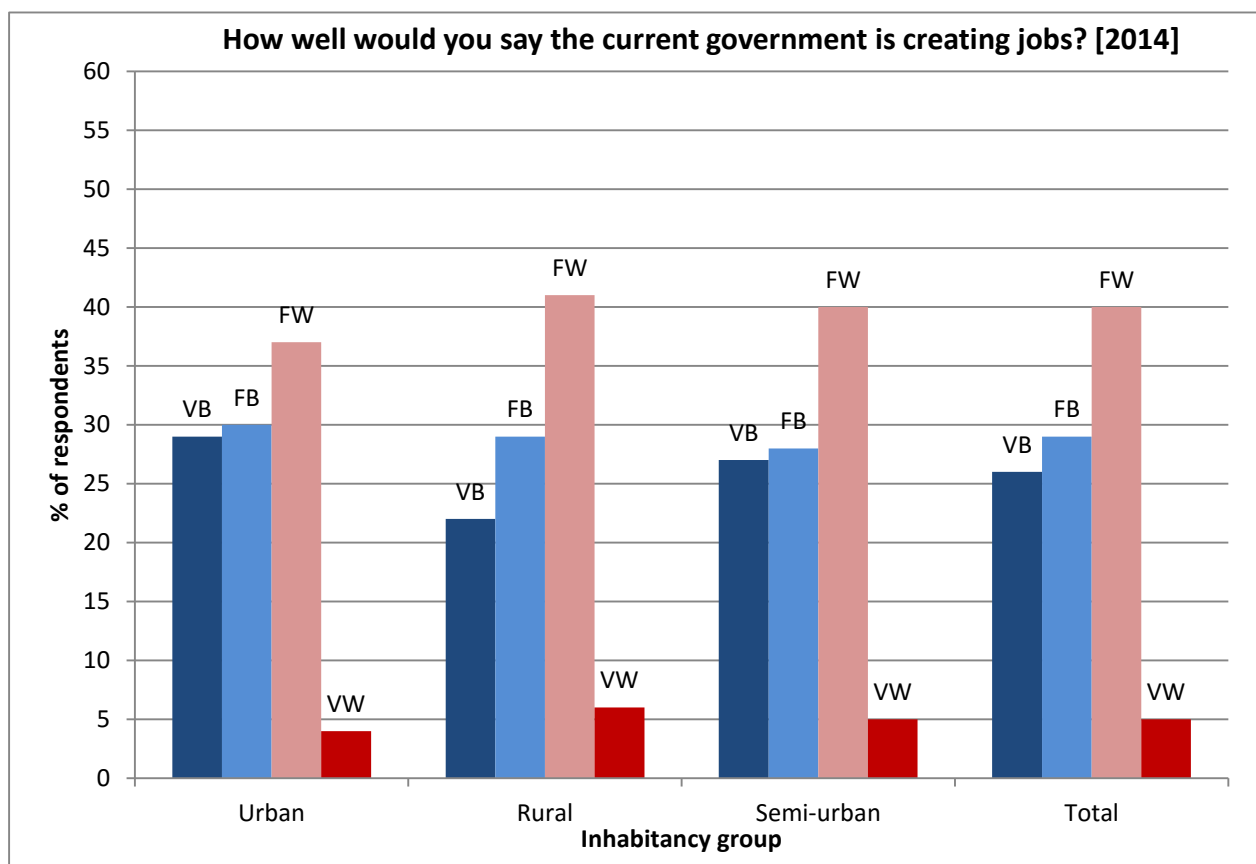
This observation that more people would prefer government to consult with them before implementing programmes corroborates qualitative data evidencing discontent with the Ipelegeng Programme, moreover. The compilers of the UNICEF Ipelegeng report documented popular concerns for how the programme was being implemented:

There was a general consensus among community leaders (councillors and *Dikgosi*) that the current projects implemented under Ipelegeng are not reflective of the needs and priorities or pressing development concerns and issues in their communities. They expressed dissatisfaction that the projects are not sustainable and will not take people out of poverty. They preferred more productive and income generating projects, particularly in Agriculture.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>167</sup> This question is similar to the question asked in Round 4 (2008), yet differed in critical ways. The 2008 version of Statement 1 suggests a vision of government as a caregiver (“take care of them like a parent”), while the 2012 survey projects government as being a prescriber of morals and setter of social guidelines (“should decide what is good for us”). The 2012 Statement 1 suggests that government should have the discretion to implement solutions to social problems without first consulting the citizenry.

<sup>168</sup> “Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme,” 108.

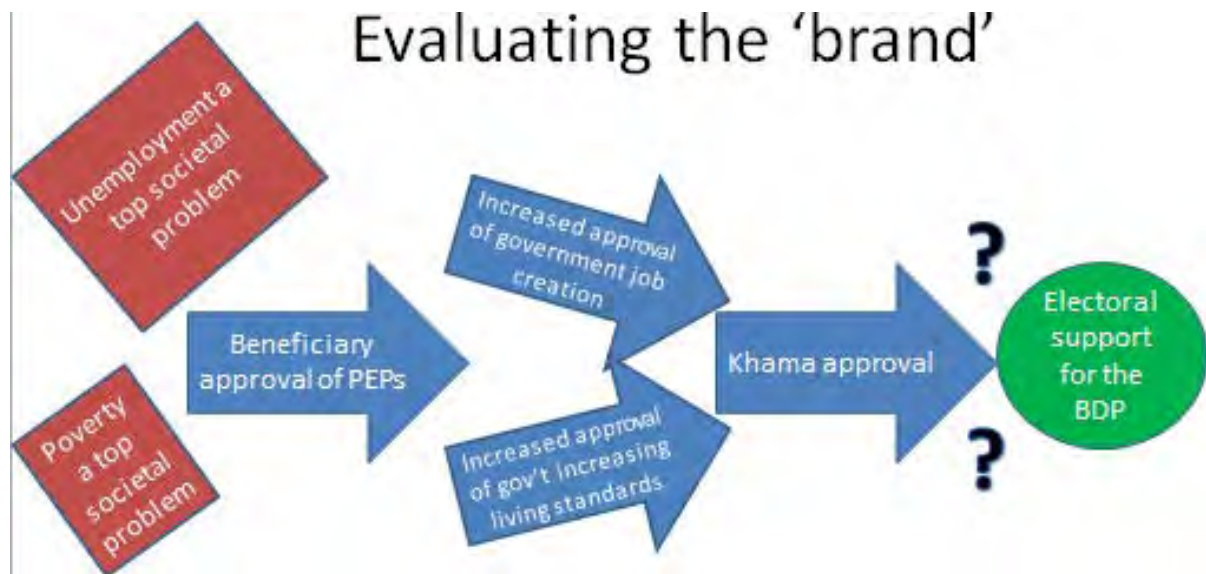
This statement suggests that a majority of community leaders who were queried about how Ipelegeng has been implemented were unhappy with what they perceived to be government's imposition of a public employment programme that did not incorporate the desires of local partners and beneficiaries. Others who were queried spoke to this concern directly: "The Government should always consult with the people and do what people want ... not what they think is good for the people. Councillors, VDC [Village Development Committees] and *Dikgosi* are important local stakeholders who should be engaged." Complaints about the lack of dialogue between the government and local representatives in the implementation of Ipelegeng is perhaps one reason why only 5 percent of rural AB survey respondents in 2014 noted that government was doing 'Very well' at creating jobs, compared to 40 percent who said it was doing 'Fairly well.' Respondents might have credited Khama with creating jobs, but still had some reservations about the route that government was taking to do so.



Nonetheless, these criticisms for how Ipelegeng was being implemented did not seem on the whole seem to counterbalance the positive reviews of the programme, though there may have been some offsetting effect. According to a survey taken of 500 Ipelegeng labourers, 82 percent of respondents testified that the scheme had improved their lives.<sup>169</sup> For a president who has striven to have employment programmes for vulnerable citizens characterise his broader political brand, the fact that Ipelegeng has achieved such positive reviews among participants has likely been important in burnishing Khama's "pro-poor" credentials, and especially so among beneficiaries. Without a nationwide survey gauging popular views on the successes of Ipelegeng and similar programmes, however, it is less clear

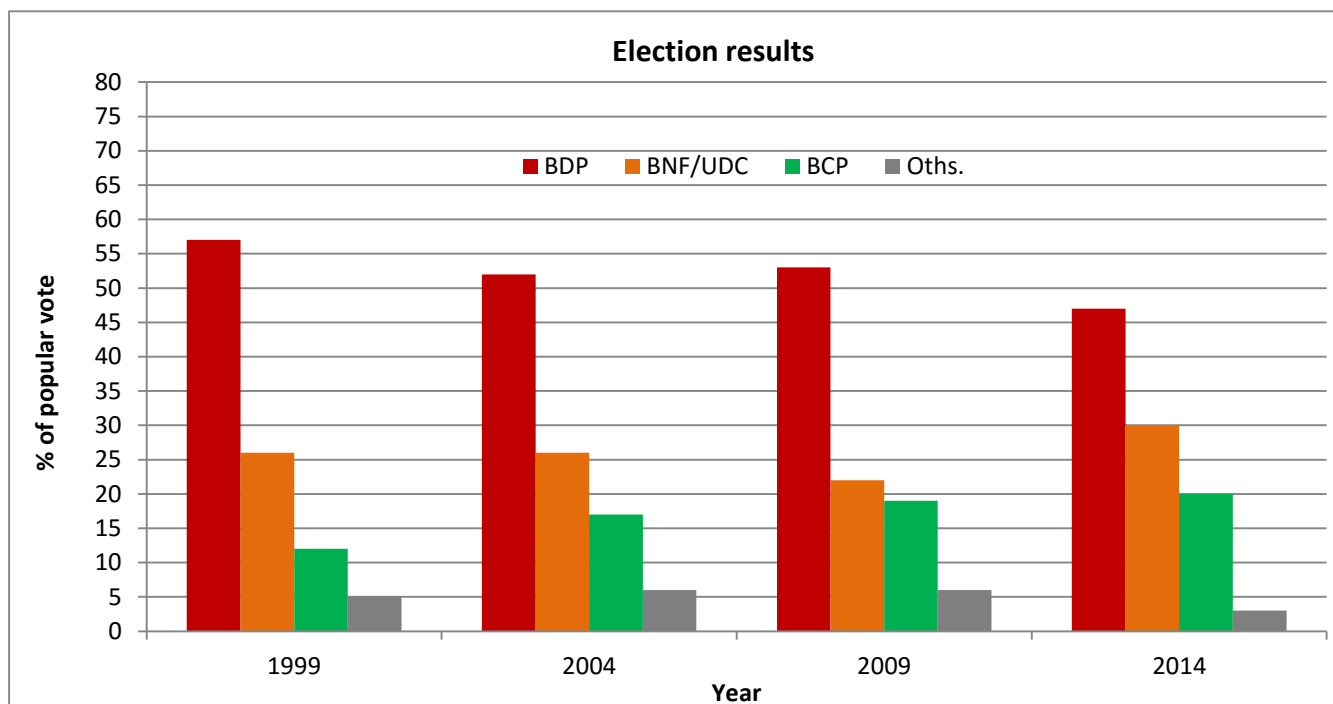
<sup>169</sup> Ibid., xix.

what effect the Khama political brand had in fostering support for the president and the BDP more broadly.

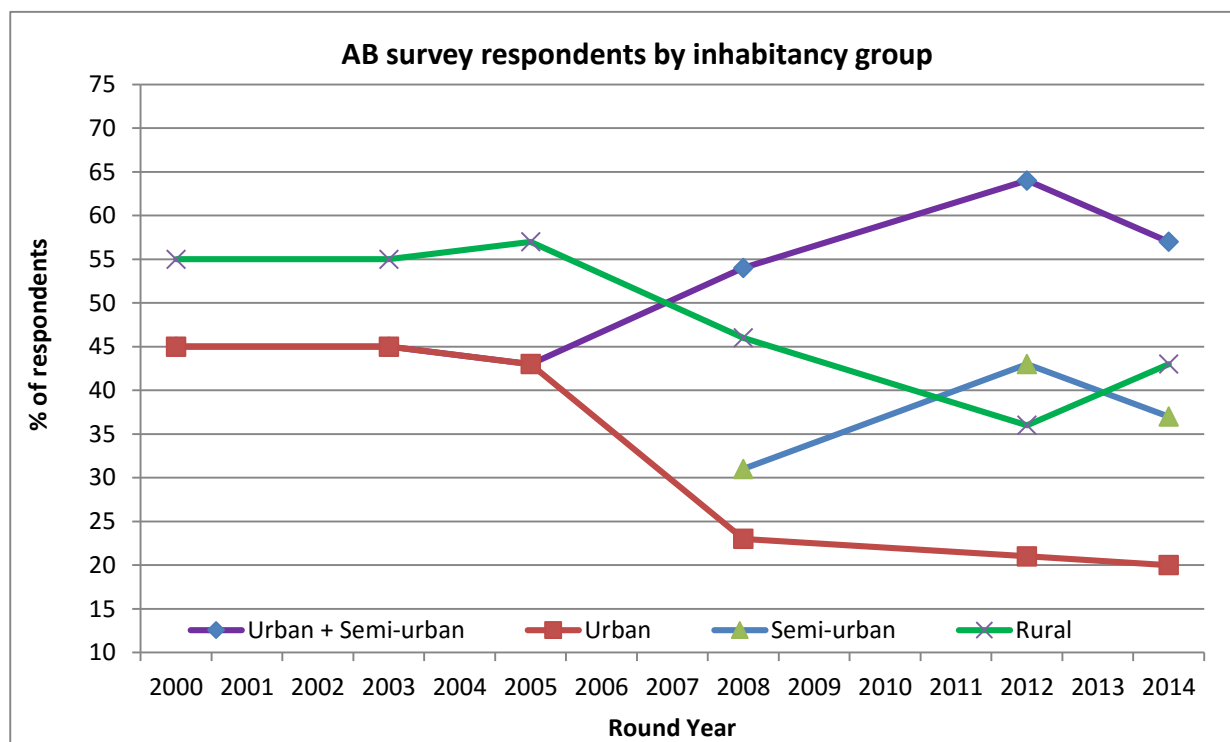


#### **Conclusion: Assessing the Khama social protection brand**

Trends in the AB survey data, evidence from the Ipelegeng review, and other qualitative data collected as part of this study suggest that it was Khama's approach to social protection that served to increase support for the president and the BDP among the rural poor but not among the urban poor. If Khama's branding around social protection was salient to voters in the 2014 election, as the data would suggest it was, the vote total for the BDP would be to a larger degree a function of the president's programmes to reduce unemployment and lived poverty. The fact that the BDP received a lower percentage of the popular vote in the 2014 election (47%) than it did in the 2009 election (53%) suggests that Khama's social protection brand was insufficient to earn the party increased support among urban Batswana, who have in recent years become a majority of all Batswana. While rural respondents' support generally increased vis-à-vis the president and his government's efforts to tackle unemployment and poverty, support among urban respondents generally decreased. These differential rates of change between urban and rural respondents was probably enough to reduce the BDP's vote percentage in 2014.



Politically in the short term, BDP popular-vote losses in the burgeoning urban centres of the country will not be enough to unseat the ruling party because of the country's first-past-the-post parliamentary system. Therefore, as long as the party can retain support among its traditional base of non-urban and elderly voters, barring district reapportionment, the party's successes in retaining these rural districts will allow them to continue in power on the basis of a majority of seats, if not a majority of votes. If Khama's brand of social protection has contributed anything to the BDP's political sustainability, it has been to reinforce this rural-voter strategy.



## **Confounding factors and alternative explanations**

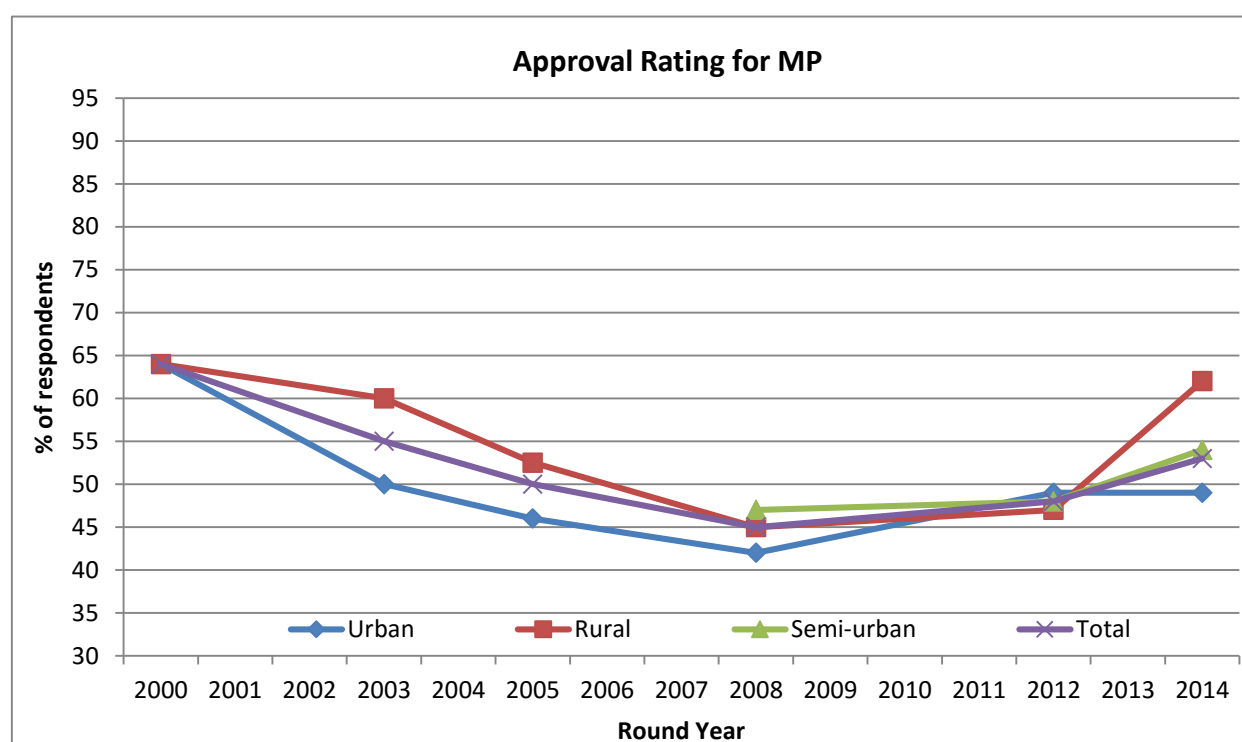
Though the relative importance that the president placed on his employment-based social protection programmes suggests that they would be salient factors in motivating voters to either vote for the BDP or for opposition parties in the 2014 election, it may well have been the case that other factors were more salient. ‘Unemployment’ was the most important concern of AB respondents, yet a lack of private-sector jobs might alternatively have been an aspect of Khama’s presidential record that convinced voters to support the opposition, especially in cities. Without data on public attitudes on the value of employment in PEPs versus the private sector, however, it becomes difficult to discern what aspect of Khama’s employment record that discontented voters found to be problematic.

While data from the Ipelegeng review offer insights into how both urban and rural labourers view the programme, it is not possible to determine from the data how Batswana who did not participate in Ipelegeng viewed the president’s social protection approach. Here again, it would be helpful to have information on whether Batswana consider PEP work to be “real” employment—this was indeed a matter of controversy during the 2014 campaign. If Batswana do not consider Khama’s PEPs to be “real” employment but rather categorically distinctive forms of social protection, then the Khama brand would be less salient in the election than if these PEPs were considered to be presidential efforts in fulfilment of Botswana’s unemployment challenges.

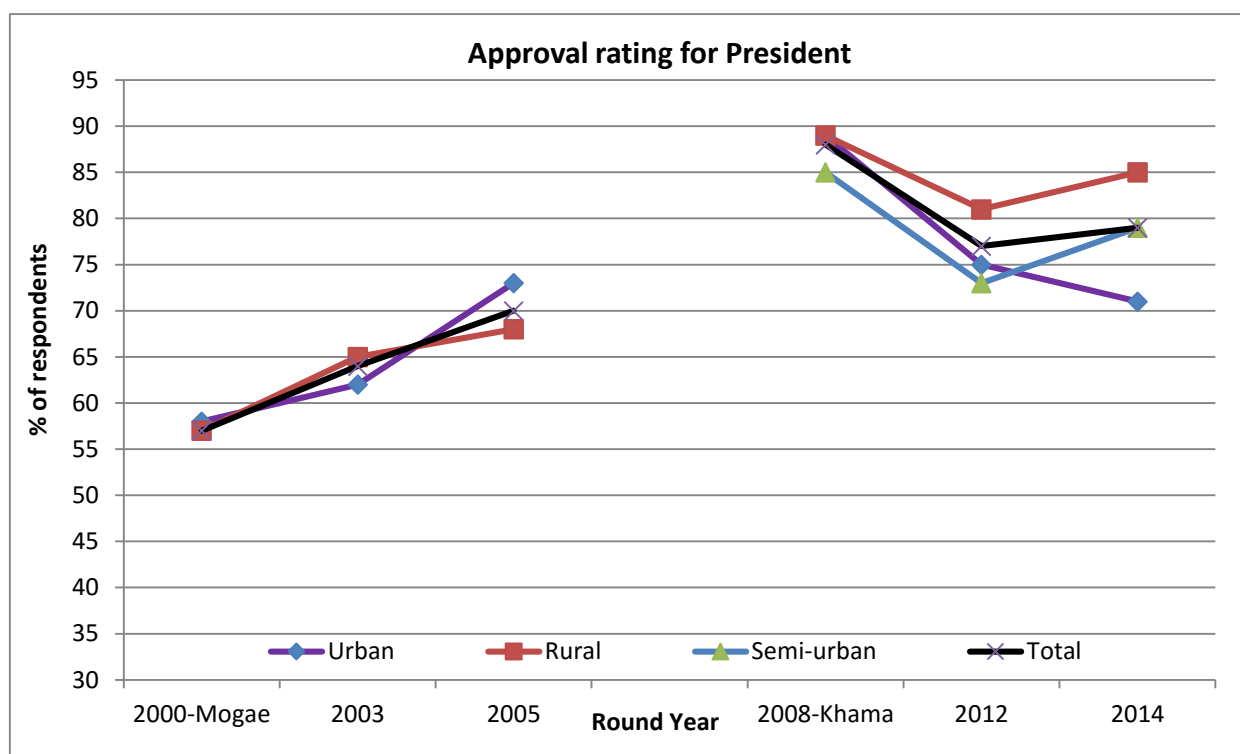
It may well also have been the case that other 2014 election issues that were not addressed in the AB survey were more salient to voters than was social protection. Election issues in 2014 included media freedom, which was seen to have been curtailed under Khama; treatment and land rights concerns regarding the indigenous San (“Basarwa”) people, who under Khama were the target of controversial development efforts; the 2011 public sector union strikes; the growing population of migrant Zimbabweans employed in skills-based trades in Botswana; and the belief that the country’s economy is not sufficiently diversified to sustain economic growth; among other issues. The president’s approach to social protection would seem likely to win him electoral support given what the AB data show to be prevailing societal concerns in the country, but the relative salience of social protection in comparison to these other 2014-specific issues is not known.

Discrepancies between the approval ratings of government and president in the AB surveys also suggest that the president was not the only important factor influencing which party a voter chose in 2014. While 85 percent of rural respondents said they approved of the job Khama was doing as president, only 61 percent said that they would vote for the BDP if an election were held tomorrow. Urban respondents approved of the job the president was doing in 71 percent of cases in 2014, yet only 40 percent said they would vote for the BDP in an election. There were likely then many voters for whom support for the president still did not merit their vote for the president’s party. In a parliamentary system such as Botswana’s, however, support for an opposition party is necessarily a vote against the incumbent president. Indeed, some voters may have approved of the president’s social protection programmes and his presidency overall, but wished for a change in government nonetheless.

Another possible explanation for this differential between presidential approval and party support may have to do with the popularity of parliamentary candidates, who unlike the party president, appear on the ballot. In recent survey rounds, respondents have reported MP approval ratings of between 26 and 33 points lower than their approval rating for Khama. This suggests that although the electorate may on the whole approve of the job that the president and government are doing in certain issue areas, disapproval for the job that a constituent's MP is doing (and therefore support for the opposition party candidate) may override what would have otherwise resulted in a vote for the BDP. This differential in approval suggests that the potency of the president's social protection brand, though it may have engendered support for Khama himself, may not have had as strong of an effect in galvanising support for the party as a whole.







An additional aspect of the 2014 election that may also have confounded a clear linkage between the appeal of Khama's social protection brand and the electoral outcome was the strength of the opposition. Unlike in most recent elections when major opposition parties have been several in number, in 2014 the opposition parties (excluding the BCP) contested the election together under the UDC banner.<sup>170</sup> The option to elect what many Batswana perceived for the first time to be a viable opposition coalition undoubtedly convinced some voters that the UDC leadership had smoothed over interparty squabbling and could finally measure up to the BDP. This factor likely boosted the UDC vote tally, which won 30 percent of the 2014 popular vote, despite what the AB survey predicted would be 13 percent for the collective opposition parties. The mostly united front that the opposition parties presented in 2014 was perhaps a significant motivator for voters to support the UDC, which came at the expense of the BDP vote. The electorate may have approved of the job Khama and his government were doing, but there seems to have been many Batswana who believed the UDC leadership could serve the country even better.

Finally, the fact that survey respondents were in many cases not election voters hampers somewhat the utility of AB data as a proxy for determining the electoral salience of political branding. For instance, AB survey respondents were given the option of whether to choose a party or none at all when requested to record their party preference if an election were held tomorrow; voters, tautologically, must choose a party. The fact that 25 percent of respondents in the 2014 AB survey reported that they did not vote in the 2009 election (though they were eligible to do so) indicates that the AB survey data may not have as accurately represented the electorate as compared to the broader adult population. To more accurately understand the beliefs and behaviours of Botswana's voters therefore, further research could incorporate an exit poll-style survey that could elicit public views on specific social protection programmes and the political elites who sponsor them.

<sup>170</sup> The Umbrella covered the Botswana People's Party (BPP), Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD), and Botswana National Front (BNF).

## **Works Cited—Data analysis**

- Boniface Dulani. “The Afrobarometer at 10: Opportunities and Challenges of Building a Network of Survey Research in Africa.” presented at the IASSIST 2010 Conference, Cornell University, June 2010.
- Brace, Paul, and Barbara Hinckley. “The Structure of Presidential Approval: Constraints within and across Presidencies.” *The Journal of Politics* 53, no. 4 (November 1, 1991): 993–1017. doi:10.2307/2131864.
- CIA World Factbook. “Botswana Demographics Profile 2014,” August 23, 2014. [http://www.indexmundi.com/botswana/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/botswana/demographics_profile.html).
- Devereux, Stephen. “Social Protection: From Handouts to Social Justice | Stephen Devereux.” *The Guardian*. Accessed May 8, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/may/17/social-protection-handouts-social-justice>.
- “Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme,” June 2012. [http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana\\_2012-004\\_Final\\_Ipelegeng.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana_2012-004_Final_Ipelegeng.pdf).
- Kandala, Ngianga-Bakwin, Eugene K Campbell, Serai Dan Rakgoasi, Banyana C Madi-Segwagwe, and Thabo T Fako. “The Geography of HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rates in Botswana.” *HIV/AIDS (Auckland, N.Z.)* 4 (July 18, 2012): 95–102. doi:10.2147/HIV.S30537.
- World Bank. “Botswana Social Protection Assessment,” December 2013. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/17846>.

## **Works Cited—Main chapter**

### *Speeches by the President*

- “Inauguration Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana,” 2008.  
“Inauguration Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana,” 2009.

State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana,” 2008.  
State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana,” 2009.  
State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana,” 2010.  
State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana,” 2011.  
State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana,” 2012.  
State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana,” 2013.

### *Speeches by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning*

Gaolathe, Baledzi, “2009 Budget Speech.”  
Matambo, O.K., “2014 Budget Speech.”

### *Manifestos*

### Botswana Congress Party

“BCP - New Party for New Millennium,” 1999.  
 “Botswana Can and Must Be Better,” 2004.  
 “A Nation at Cross Roads,” 2009.  
 “Ready to Lead: Leading Botswana out of the crossroads,” 2014.

#### Botswana Democratic Party

[No title], 1984.  
 [No title], 1989.  
 1994  
 “A Millennium for Opportunities,” 1999.  
 “Secure your future,” 2009.  
 “Vote BDP, Trust BDP,” 2014.

#### Botswana National Front

[No title], 1994.  
 “Working Together for Success,” 1999.  
 “Together We Shall Deliver,” 2004.  
 “The Key to a Quality Life for All,” 2009.

#### Umbrella for Democratic Change

“The Five Pillars,” 2014.

#### *Hansards*

Debate of the National Assembly of Botswana, December 2014.

#### *Key informant interviews*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
<i>NGO</i>	
Motshwari Kitso	National Director, SOS Children’s Villages
Rudy Jansen	Advisor, Ditshwanelo: Botswana Centre for Human Rights
<i>Government</i>	
Kelapile Ndobano	Deputy Secretary for Macroeconomic Policy, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
John Mothibi	Permanent Secretary, Poverty & Vulnerability, Office of the President
Matthew Wright	Deputy Director, Research at Bank of Botswana.
Ruth Radibe	Director of Social Protection, Ministry of Local Government
Steven Ludick	Director of Community Development, Ministry of Local Government

<i>Political</i>	
Dithapelo Keorapetse	Member of Parliament, Botswana Congress Party
Moabi Mogorosi	Umbrella for Democratic Change (Botswana National Front)
<i>Academia</i>	
Mogopodi Lekorwe	Afrobarometer National Investigator for Botswana, University of Botswana
Bashi Mothusi	Senior Lecturer, Public Administration Coordinator, Democracy Research Project (DRP) University of Botswana
Gape Kaboyakgosi	Senior Research Fellow, Public Sector Reforms Unit, BIDPA
Happy Siphambe	Faculty of social sciences, University of Botswana
Tebogo Seleka	Executive Director, Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis

#### *Other interviews*

Botswana Government. President Khama Extended BTV Interview, January 21, 2014.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32USZ-0GYWo>.

“One on One with President Ian Khama.” *The Voice*, July 18, 2014.  
<http://www.thevoicebw.com/2014/07/18/one-one-president-ian-khama/>.

#### *Government documents*

“National Strategy for Poverty Reduction,” 2003.

“Vision 2016: Towards Prosperity for All,” 1997, <http://www.vision2016.co.bw/>.

*Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme*, June 2012.  
[http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana\\_2012-004\\_Final\\_Ipelegeng.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana_2012-004_Final_Ipelegeng.pdf).

#### *Media reports*

“BDP Launches Its General Election Campaign.” *GabzFM*. Accessed May 18, 2015.  
<http://www.gabzfm.com/bdp-launches-its-general-election-campaign>.

Bame Piet, and Ntibinyane Ntibinyane. “When Khama Doesn’t Care, Even about the US.” *Mmegi Online*. Accessed December 1, 2014.  
<http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=4505>.

“Botswana Appeals for Drought Aid.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1987.  
[http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-09/news/mn-490\\_1\\_drought-aid](http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-09/news/mn-490_1_drought-aid).

- “Botswana: Opposition Gets a Whiff of Power.” *The M&G Online*. Accessed March 9, 2015. <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-10-24-opposition-gets-a-whiff-of-power/>.
- Chedza Mmolawa. “Tirelo Sechaba to Alleviate Youth Unemployment,” November 22, 2013. <http://www.echoonline.co.bw/index/index.php/local-news/item/809-tirelo-sechaba-to-alleviate-youth-unemployment>.
- Goitsemodimo Williams. “BDP Has Good Record - Khama.” *Botswana Daily News*, August 17, 2014. <http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=13724>.
- “Incumbent Botswana President Seretse Ian Khama Rides a Bicycle While... News Photo | Getty Images.” Accessed March 7, 2015. <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/incumbent-botswana-president-seretse-ian-khama-rides-a-news-photo/457378226>.
- Jay Naidoo. “A Leader I Would Vote for: Botswana’s Former President Festus Mogae,” April 4, 2014. <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2014-04-04-a-leader-i-would-vote-for-botswanas-former-president-festus-mogae/#.VVvcgkaZqVB>.
- John Regonamanye. “Opposition Politicians Rubbish Blankets Donation in Old Naledi.” *Sunday Standard*, May 24, 2013. <http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php/email.php?NewsID=16949><http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php/email.php?NewsID=16949>.
- Justice Kavahematui. “President Khama’s Speech Decoded.” *Botswana Guardian*, November 8, 2013. <http://botswanaguardian.co.bw/latest-news/690-president-khama-s-speech-decoded.html>.
- Kabo Matsapa. “‘5 Years of Broken Promises’ - Saleshando.” *The Tswana Times*, April 3, 2013. [http://www.thetswanatimes.co.bw/news/politics/527-5-years-of-broken-promises-saleshando.html?fb\\_action\\_ids=238103012996908&fb\\_action\\_types=og.likes&fb\\_source=aggregation&fb\\_aggregation\\_id=288381481237582](http://www.thetswanatimes.co.bw/news/politics/527-5-years-of-broken-promises-saleshando.html?fb_action_ids=238103012996908&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_source=aggregation&fb_aggregation_id=288381481237582).
- Kenneth Dipholo. “Botswana Has Become the Property of President Khama.” *Sunday Standard*, February 23, 2014. <http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php?NewsID=19209&GroupID=5>.
- Kenosi Daniel. “BCP Brands Khama a Failure.” *The Voice*, July 18, 2014. <http://www.thevoicebw.com/2013/04/05/bcp-brands-khama-a-failure/>.
- Leungo Rakgati. “Explore Other Projects.” *Botswana Daily News*, June 23, 2013. <http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=3641>.
- “Masisi New Vice-President.” *The Ngami Times*, November 2014. <http://www.ngamitimes.com/2014/11/masisi-new-vice-president/?lang=hmn>.
- Simon Allison. “Botswana in Crisis: Perspective from a Journalist in Exile.” *Mmegi Online*, November 27, 2014. <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=46432>.

Tsaone Basimanebotlhe. "Boko, the Push Rannatshe Needed." *Mmegi Online*, October 17, 2014. <http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=46777>.

Thamani Shabani. "Half Quit Tirelo Setshaba." *Daily News*, June 19, 2014. <http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=12237>.

Thandy Tebogo. "Khama Walks about Gaborone West North." *The Daily News*, July 22, 2013. <http://en.africatime.com/botswana/articles/khama-walks-about-gaborone-west-north>.

#### *Secondary sources*

Acemoglu, Daron, Simon H. Johnson, and James A. Robinson. "An African Success Story: Botswana." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2001. doi:10.2139/ssrn.290791.

BIDPA, and International Poverty Centre. "Poverty Status Report for Botswana: Incidence, Trends, and Dynamics." Research Project Report, September 2005.

Botlhomilwe, Mokganedi Zara, and David Sebudubudu. "Elections in Botswana: A Ritual Enterprise?" *Open Area Studies Journal* 4 (2011): 96–103.

"Botswana Inflation Rate." Accessed January 23, 2015. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/botswana/inflation-cpi>.

Bryant, Coralie, Betsy Stephens, and Sherry MacLiver. "Rural to Urban Migration: Some Data from Botswana." *African Studies Review* 21, no. 02 (September 1978): 85–99. doi:10.2307/523664.

CIA World Factbook. "Botswana Demographics Profile 2014," August 23, 2014. [http://www.indexmundi.com/botswana/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/botswana/demographics_profile.html).

Daniel, John, Adam Habib, and Roger Southall. *State of the Nation: South Africa, 2003-2004*. HSRC Press, 2003.

"Data: Botswana," July 18, 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/botswana?display=default>.

Farhat, Maham, Andrew Kardan, and Mohamed Gure. "Review of FAO Cash For Work Programme in Somalia," 2014.

Good, Kenneth. "Authoritarian Liberalism: A Defining Characteristic of Botswana." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 14, no. 1 (January 1996): 29–51. doi:10.1080/02589009608729580.

———. "The Presidency of General Ian Khama: The Militarization of the Botswana 'Miracle.'" *African Affairs*, December 14, 2009, adp086. doi:10.1093/afraf/adp086.

Harvey, Charles. "Botswana: Is the Economic Miracle Over?" *Journal of African Economies* 1, no. 3 (November 1, 1992): 335–68.

Harvey, Charles, and Stephen R. Lewis. *Policy Choice and Development Performance in Botswana*. Macmillan, 1990.

- Holm, John D., and Patrick Molutsi. *Democracy in Botswana: The Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Gaborone, 1-5 August 1988*. Ohio Univ Pr, 1989.
- Hope Sr, Kempe Ronald, and Wayne A Edge. "Growth with Uneven Development: Urban-Rural Socio-Economic Disparities in Botswana." *Geoforum* 27, no. 1 (February 1996): 53–62. doi:10.1016/0016-7185(95)00031-3.
- Masire, Sir Quett Ketumile Joni. *Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat*. Edited by Stephen R. Lewis Jr. Gaborone, Botswana: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Molomo, Mpho G. "Understanding Government and Opposition Parties in Botswana." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 65–92. doi:10.1080/14662040008447810.
- Munemo, Ngonidzashe. *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*. Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2012.
- Mwansa, Lengwe-Katembula, Taolo Lucas, and Kwaku Osei-Hwedie. "The Practice of Social Policy in Botswana." *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 13, no. 2 (1998): 55–74.
- Natural Resources and Environment Department. "Learning to Live with Drought and Climate Variability." *FAO Corporate Document Repository*, n.d. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/y5744e/y5744e0c.htm>. 66
- Poteete, Amy R. "The Absence of Intergroup Violence in Botswana: An Assessment of the Role of Development Strategies." *The Economic Roots of Conflict and Cooperation in Africa*, 2013, 183.
- Resnick, Danielle. *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*. Cambridge University Press, 2013. <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ITRaAQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR15&dq=urban+poverty+and+party+populism+in+african&ots=MzzbXebbtX&sig=mzTc-lSyYBrYELP5OslYqe0t-9k>.
- Sebudubudu, David. "The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa: Botswana-A Relatively Successful African Initiative." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 4, no. 7 (2010): 249–62.
- Sebudubudu, David, and Mokganedi Zara Botlhomilwe. "The Critical Role of Leadership in Botswana's Development: What Lessons?" *Leadership* 8, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 29–45. doi:10.1177/1742715011426962.
- Seekings, Jeremy. "Employment Guarantee or Minimum Income? Workfare and Welfare in Developing Countries," January 1, 2006. <http://www.inderscienceonline.com/doi/abs/10.1504/IJEWE.2006.009357>.
- . "Welfare Reform and the Conservative Social Contract: Botswana under Botswana Democratic Party Governments, 1994-2010," forthcoming 2015.

- Sekwati, Lesego, Nettimi Narayana, and Mpho Raboloko. "Understanding the Nature of Household Poverty in Botswana." *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 26, no. 1 (2013): 71–82.
- Selolwane, Onalenna. "From National to People's Poverty in Changing Policy Regimes." *Poverty Reduction and Changing Policy Regimes in Botswana*, 2012, 1.
- "Support to Smallholder Arable Farmers in Botswana: Agricultural Development or Social Protection?" UNDP-UNEP-Environment Initiative, 2013.  
[http://www.unpei.org/sites/default/files/e\\_library\\_documents/Botswana\\_POLICY\\_Brief\\_Support\\_to\\_smallholder\\_arable\\_farmers\\_in\\_Botswana.pdf](http://www.unpei.org/sites/default/files/e_library_documents/Botswana_POLICY_Brief_Support_to_smallholder_arable_farmers_in_Botswana.pdf).
- Surender, Rebecca, Michael Noble, Gemma Wright, and Phakama Ntshongwana. "Social Assistance and Dependency in South Africa: An Analysis of Attitudes to Paid Work and Social Grants." *Journal of Social Policy* 39, no. 02 (April 2010): 203–21.  
doi:10.1017/S0047279409990638.
- Tesliuc, Cornelia, Jose Silverio Marques, Lillian Mookodi, Jeanine Braithwaite, Siddarth Sharma, and Dolly Ntseane. "Botswana Social Protection," 2013.  
<https://wdronline.worldbank.com/handle/10986/18968>.
- Tsie, Balefi. "The Political Context of Botswana's Development Performance." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 4 (1996): 599–616.
- United Nations Global Pulse, n.d. <http://www.unglobalpulse.org/resources/brief-effects-global-economic-crisis-botswana>.
- World Bank. "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," December 2013.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10986/17846>.



## Chapter 3: Malawi

---

### **Championing the poor: Branding around poverty reduction as a response to electoral competition in Malawi, 2005-2014**

In the 2009 election, Malawi's president Bingu wa Mutharika scored an overwhelming victory, winning 66 percent of the vote and clear majorities in the country's three regions—North, Centre, and South. The margin of victory was itself noteworthy: Mutharika won by 35 points over John Tembo of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), by far the widest margin of Malawi's five presidential elections to date. More extraordinary still was the fact that the previous three presidential elections had all featured outcomes in which a candidate's regional identity strongly predicted his electoral performance. Indeed, no candidate had before earned a plurality of votes outside of his home region. Since a plurality of the country inhabits Malawi's Southern region, the three presidential elections prior to 2009 all featured southern winners. Mutharika, candidate for the southern-based United Democratic Front (UDF) party, had been the latest beneficiary of this regionalism, which had allowed him one of the slimmest margins of electoral victory in 2004.

Between 2004 and 2009, it was Mutharika's ability to champion the interests of the country's largest social demographic—smallholder farmers—that allowed the president to transcend the entrenched regional tendencies characterising Malawi's three prior presidential elections.<sup>1</sup> The likeliest cause of this electoral breakthrough was the Agricultural Input Subsidy Programme (AISP) that the Mutharika government (2004-2012) introduced in 2005.<sup>2</sup> AISP, which was the culmination of previous input subsidy programmes of lesser scope, distributed vouchers that farmers could use to purchase fertiliser and food crop seeds at (initially) one-quarter of the commercial price. Though the government had sponsored input programmes in the past, Mutharika's unprecedented scope of investment in fertiliser subsidies, which more than doubled the country's maize yield from 2005 to 2006, transformed the country from being perennially dependent on imported food aid to being secure in its own agricultural capacity.<sup>3</sup> "Indications of positive impact ... of the programme," Chinsinga (2007) noted at the time, "are raising its profile as the magic wand to the problem of food insecurity."<sup>4</sup> By the end of 2006, not only had Malawians produced enough food to feed the country, but when other countries in the region were suffering from drought, the government of Malawi was able to export maize to them, a pride-affirming

---

<sup>1</sup> In Malawi the ratio of rural to urban dwellers is about 4-to-1. Agriculture is by far the most common source of livelihood for rural Malawians. Of rural farmers, approximately 9-out-of-10 practice smallholder agriculture.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the programme was changed to Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) in 2010. Dyton Maliro, "Comparison of Agricultural Input Subsidies and Social Cash Transfers as Policies for Reducing Vulnerability to Hunger in Malawi" (University of East Anglia, 2011), 2, <http://core.kmi.open.ac.uk/download/pdf/2778813.pdf>.

There has been significant literature devoted to the links between AISP/FISP and Mutharika's electoral success. For recent explorations of this topic, see Ferree and Horowitz (2010) and Brazys *et al.* (2015). This paper extends the analyses of these scholars backwards in time, elucidating how political competition motivated Mutharika (and then Banda) to brand themselves around particular poverty reduction strategies that comprised their respective policy agendas.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>4</sup> Blessings Chinsinga, "Reclaiming Policy Space: Lessons from Malawi's 2005/2006 Fertilizer Subsidy Programme," *Policy Brief No 13* (2007): 17, [http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/futureagriculture/fac\\_research\\_paper\\_no6.pdf](http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/futureagriculture/fac_research_paper_no6.pdf).

phenomenon for a nation that had long been accustomed to importing food to meet deficits. When in 2009 Mutharika stood for a second term as president, though this time as the candidate for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), a large majority of voters believed for the first time that, in the president's words, "it is possible for Africa to become the food basket of the world."<sup>5</sup>

The extraordinary risk that Mutharika took in 2005 to offer subsidised fertiliser to farmers, which ultimately engendered a "Green Revolution" across Sub-Saharan Africa, was the product of Malawi's particular political circumstances in the mid-2000s.<sup>6</sup> Though AISP/FISP and the electoral outcomes it has engendered have been extensively documented, most notably by Ferree and Horowitz (2010) and Brazys *et al.* (2015), insufficient attention has been paid to the role that electoral competition and the donor agenda have played in prompting Mutharika to brand himself as the "food security president."<sup>7</sup> This paper thus extends the analyses of these scholars backwards in time, elucidating how political competition motivated Mutharika to brand himself around an enhanced food production-based poverty reduction strategy.

This instance of political branding, moreover, foreshadowed the political branding of Malawi's most recent former president, Joyce Banda (2012-2014). Despite the fact that Mutharika and Banda both founded political parties from which they contested for election, there has been a dearth of scholarship comparing the two presidents and how they both strove to achieve support from a national electorate. Like her predecessor, Banda responded to circumstances of intense political competition by pursuing her own poverty reduction brand, though hers centred on social protection rather than on food production.<sup>8</sup> With more competitive candidates in the 2014 race than ever before, Banda was under even more pressure than Mutharika to distinguish her candidacy from the offerings of her three main political rivals. Though these two cases of presidential branding were followed by very different electoral outcomes in 2009 and 2014, patterns in the behaviour of presidential

---

<sup>5</sup> Molalet Tsedeke, "'It Is Possible for Africa to Become the Food Basket of the World,' Says Mutharika," *Nepad.org*, October 28, 2010, <http://www.nepad.org/foodsecurity/news/1786/%E2%80%99Cit-possible-africa-become-food-basket-world%E2%80%9D-mutharika>.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey D. Sachs, "How Malawi Fed Its Own People," *The New York Times*, April 19, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/20/opinion/how-malawi-fed-its-own-people.html>.

The idea that AISP had sparked a 'Green Revolution' across Africa is likely not to have been an exaggeration. Chinsinga noted that input subsidy programmes "hardly featured on the policy landscape in 2000, [but] by 2011 10 African countries were spending roughly US\$1.05 billion on ISPs, amounting to 28.6% of their public expenditure on agriculture." Blessings Chinsinga and Colin Poulton, "Beyond Technocratic Debates: The Significance and Transience of Political Incentives in the Malawi Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP)," *Development Policy Review* 32, no. s2 (November 1, 2014): 123, doi:10.1111/dpr.12079.

<sup>7</sup> Instead of understanding voters as being concerned with particular election issues or specific programmes, this analysis understands candidates and parties to be offering particular political brands. Voters may understand a candidate to be "pro-poor"—one example of a brand—for a variety of reasons that could include consideration of the candidate's programmatic agenda, policy proposals, rhetoric vis-à-vis poor citizens, and party/campaign symbolism. Viewing candidates as being representative of political brands offers a more holistic paradigm for understanding how and why citizens vote the way they do.

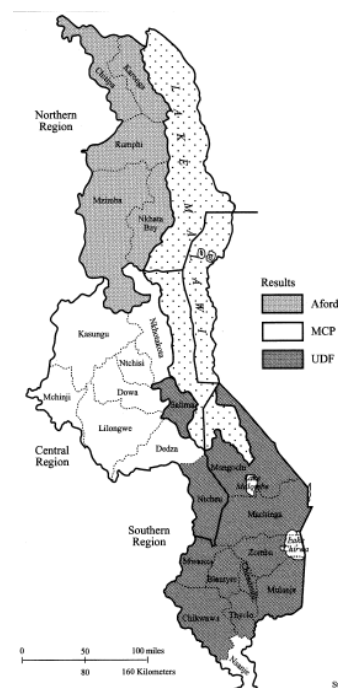
<sup>8</sup> There is no consensus definition of which programmes constitute "social protection" in Malawi. For the purposes of this paper, social protection programmes refers to programmes that are often characterised as "social safety nets" or "cash transfers." The poverty reduction programmes that Joyce Banda introduced as president were either in fact examples of or in the style of these kinds of social protection programmes. Though Mutharika's agricultural subsidy programme has sometimes been referred to as "social protection," for the purposes of this analysis AISP/FISP should not be construed as a social protection programme but rather as a productivity-enhancing poverty reduction programme.

candidates in the face of political competition offers more fundamental insights into the nature of elections in Malawi.

## Ethno-regional politics in Malawi

Though perhaps competitive by regional standards, presidential elections in Malawi's first decade of multiparty competition were altogether predictable. Following a 1993 referendum that felled the one-party state of "Life President" Hastings Kamuzu Banda (MCP), there emerged among Malawians, noted Osei-Hwedie (1998), a "strong perception and belief that they can only benefit from government jobs, finances and resources if fellow clansmen are in control of the political system."<sup>9</sup> From 1964 to 1994, Banda pursued a systematic elevation of ethnic Chewa leaders—predominant in the Central region—into the civil service while generally excluding leaders from other ethnic groups who inhabit Malawi's Northern and Southern regions.<sup>10</sup> After three decades of Chewa favouritism, the new political parties that emerged after 1993, including the UDF and Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), sought to redistribute the country's social and political capital to their constituents who were generally not Chewa.<sup>11</sup>

This balkanised electoral map after 1994 awarded the presidency essentially by default to Bakili Muluzi, a Yao tribesman from the populous Southern region. After the election, in which he won 47 percent of the vote, Muluzi adopted Banda's practice of neopatrimonial politics, shoring up support in his native region. For instance, as Phiri and Edriss (2013) documented, the Muluzi presidency featured far higher levels of corruption in the civil service than what the country had experienced under Banda, allowing the UDF to strengthen its ties with tribal leaders from across the South.<sup>12</sup> The UDF's war chest, largely pilfered from government tenders, allowed Muluzi, as Gaynor (2010) argued, to extend a "seemingly compassionate" handout campaign toward "needy" Malawians.<sup>13</sup> The UDF government also acted to root out whatever grassroots networks the old Banda regime had established in the South, Cammack *et al.* (2007) argued, by abolishing local government councils altogether.<sup>14</sup> These practices further strengthened support for the president in his home region and can largely explain Muluzi's successful



<sup>9</sup> Bertha Osei-Hwedie, "The Role of Ethnicity in Multi-Party Politics in Malawi and Zambia," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 16, no. 2 (1998): 204–241. Hastings Kamuzu Banda is of no relation to the subsequent president, Joyce Banda.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 227–228.

<sup>11</sup> Karen Ferree and Jeremy Horowitz, "Ties That Bind? The Rise and Decline of Ethno-Regional Partisanship in Malawi, 1994–2009," *Democratization* 17, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 534–63, doi:10.1080/13510341003700394.

<sup>12</sup> Horace Phiri and Abdi Khalil Edriss, "Neopatrimonialism and Agricultural Protection," *International Food Policy Research Institute*, November 2013, <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/masspwp1.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Niamh Gaynor, "Between Citizenship and Clientship: The Politics of Participatory Governance in Malawi," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 801–16, doi:10.1080/03057070.2010.527637.

<sup>14</sup> Diana Cammack *et al.*, "Neopatrimonial Politics, Decentralisation and Local Government: Uganda and Malawi in 2006," *Good Governance, Aid Modalities and Poverty Reduction: Linkages to the Millennium Development Goals and Implications for Irish Aid, Research Project (RP-05-GG) of the Advisory Board for Irish Aid*. Dec, 2007, <https://blds.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/CammacketalGAPWP2.pdf>.

election and re-election bids. The fact that Muluzi's tactics had in this way favoured Malawians of the South over residents of other regions perpetuated the system of patronage politics that had theretofore characterised Malawi's political economy.

With an entrenched patronage system presenting strong incentives for voters to favour the candidate from their home region, early presidential elections did not principally hinge on issues or the policy performance of the UDF-led government. Ferree and Horowitz noted how Malawians throughout the Northern and Central parts of the country generally approved of Muluzi's performance as president, but at the same time said they would vote for other parties in an election.<sup>15</sup> The results of one 1994 election exit poll showed how regionalised the electorate in fact was: candidates from the North (Chakufwa Chihana – AFORD), Centre (Banda), and South (Muluzi) were supported by at least two-thirds of voters from their respective home regions.<sup>16</sup> Muluzi followed his election in 1994 with re-election in 1999 again with robust support from Southern voters, despite winning only 11 percent of votes from outside of his home region.

In 2004, the UDF won a third-consecutive presidential contest, though this time with Muluzi's protégé Mutharika leading the ticket. While the 2004 race featured more presidential contenders than had contested previously, no candidate was able to make significant inroads into areas other than where he had originated. This allowed Mutharika, Ferree and Horowitz argued, to squeak by his rivals with just 36 percent of the vote, predominantly owing to a bloc of Southern support.<sup>17</sup> Had Mutharika not opted to found his own party (the DPP), which measurably increased the competition of Malawi's elections, the 2009 electoral map might have looked altogether similar to that of the first three elections.

### **The UDF brand: inclusivity for poor Malawians**

Though the UDF conducted its politics in a way that reinforced patronage networks, Muluzi's rhetoric and government policies, paradoxically, seemed to have been tailored to foster a more universal base of support. This was clear to van Donge (1995), who argued that viewing candidates as "merely regional phenomena ... would overlook their attempts to portray themselves as [being] of much wider significance."<sup>18</sup> With the emergence of political competition in 1994, political parties have crafted party documents and pursued particular policies in office that have been distinctive from the offerings of other parties. Though the thematic resonance between parties may at times make them seem interchangeable, Chunga (2014) argued, increases to political competition over time have accompanied candidates' efforts to become increasingly specialised in their policy offerings.<sup>19</sup> Branding may not have profoundly altered the outcomes of Malawi's first three presidential elections, but the UDF's increased emphasis on poverty reduction and food security for all Malawians differentiated the party from its more elitist MCP rivals and laid the groundwork for Mutharika to later foster his own political brand around food production.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ferree and Horowitz, "Ties That Bind?"

<sup>16</sup> Afrobarometer, "A Country Turning Blue?: Political Party Support and the End of Regionalism in Malawi," Briefing Paper, (November 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Ferree and Horowitz, "Ties That Bind?"

<sup>18</sup> Jan Kees van Donge, "Kamuzu's Legacy: The Democratization of Malawi: Or Searching for the Rules of the Game in African Politics," *African Affairs*, 1995, 227–57.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph J. Chunga, "Examining the Relevance of Political Parties in Malawi," 2014, [http://afrobarometer.org/files/documents/briefing\\_papers/afrobriefno125.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/files/documents/briefing_papers/afrobriefno125.pdf).

As a self-described “underground movement” that liberated Malawi from the regime of the autocratic Kamuzu Banda, Muluzi strove to market the UDF as a populist response to the classist society over which the old MCP had presided.<sup>20</sup> Muluzi developed a presidential agenda that prioritised poverty alleviation and inclusive growth for the masses whose development had been suppressed by the *ancien régime* and its corporatist policies.<sup>21</sup> Muluzi’s pursuit of a “pro-poor” brand contrasted with that of Banda, whose regime Chinsinga (2012) described as being “probably the most repressive regime in the entire southern African region.”<sup>22</sup> The former government had harboured “no commitment to poverty reduction and an aggressive economic growth strategy based on industrialisation.”<sup>23</sup> Banda’s agricultural policies, moreover, favoured an elite class of civil-servant farmers who consolidated tracts of customary land and leased it to smallholder farmers, further exacerbating rural poverty.<sup>24</sup> Muluzi’s brand, which was in part based in the government programmes he endorsed, implied that he would undermine these limitations that Banda had erected as barriers to inclusive growth. By abolishing the Special Crops Act, for instance, Muluzi liberated smallholder farmers to produce cash crops, most notably burley tobacco. The previous government had restricted cultivation of cash crops to (often white and/or foreign) commercial farmers so as to maximise the foreign exchange reserves that facilitated the industrial development projects taking place in Lilongwe.<sup>25</sup> Branding against the legacy of this top-down regime, Muluzi suggested that the UDF would be a populist “Front” that was dedicated to uplifting poor Malawians.

In addition to undoing the old MCP policies that marginalised poor farmers, Muluzi pursued an extensive social protection infrastructure prioritising poverty alleviation for the able-bodied poor. According to Chirwa and Dorward (2013), the “failures by [Banda’s] policies in dealing with core poverty/vulnerability and food security problems” affirmed Malawi’s place as the poorest country in southern Africa.<sup>26</sup> In 1998, over 65 percent of the country still lived on less than US\$1 per day (“poor”) while nearly 29 percent were living on half of that (“extremely poor”).<sup>27</sup> In an open letter headlining the party’s 1999 manifesto (“Eradicating Poverty”), Muluzi stated how the party had “in line with our 1994 campaign pledges ... decided to make poverty alleviation priority number one in all our development policies.”<sup>28</sup> He highlighted in the letter two programmes that were targeted at Malawi’s able-bodied poor. The first programme was the “now famous and highly successful” Starter Pack Scheme (SPS), which provided to farmers 2.86 million packs containing enough seeds and fertiliser to farm 0.1ha of land.<sup>29</sup> The government’s initial (1998) share of spending on the

---

<sup>20</sup> “Malawi Ex-President Muluzi Farewell Speech at UDF Convention,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 1, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/10/31/malawi-ex-president-muluzi-farewell-speech-at-udf-convention/>.

<sup>21</sup> Blessings Chinsinga, “The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy Processes in Malawi: A Case Study of the Fertilizer Subsidy Programme,” 2012, <http://mobile.opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/2249>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Mick Foster et al., “Poverty Reduction Strategy and Public Expenditure in Five African Countries,” 2002, 5, <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/2051.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Phiri and Edriss, “Neopatrimonialism and Agricultural Protection,” 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.; UDF Election Manifesto, 1994.

<sup>26</sup> Ephraim Chirwa and Andrew Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies: The Recent Malawi Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 69.

<sup>27</sup> “1998 Integrated Household Survey and Poverty Analysis” (National Statistics Office, 1998), <http://www.nsomalawi.mw/publications/integrated-household-survey/1998-integrated-household-survey.html>.

<sup>28</sup> UDF Election Manifesto, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Catherine Longley, John Coulter, and Roy Thompson, “Malawi Rural Livelihoods Starter Pack Scheme 1998-99 Evaluation Report,” *ODI, London*, 1999, 1,

programme was 56 percent (US\$14.5 million) with the rest being supported by a consortium of donors led by DFID.<sup>30</sup> The programme was able to achieve in its earliest manifestation, Devereux and Macauslan (2006) noted, sufficient output to furnish 16 percent of all smallholder farming yield.<sup>31</sup> This was “not enough for national self-sufficiency, but enough to close the food gap substantially.”<sup>32</sup> By the 1999 election, Malawians were remarking on “Muluzi maize,” and the SPS “featured highly in the political campaigns of both government and opposition candidates.”<sup>33</sup> Not only did SPS help to characterise the Muluzi brand, but it supplied an important programmatic precedent for Bingu wa Mutharika’s more expansive AISP.

In addition to prioritising the empowerment of smallholder farmers, Muluzi emphasised relief and inclusivity for Malawians not otherwise engaged in farming practices. The other programme that Muluzi touted in the UDF manifesto was the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF). A public employment programme funded largely by the World Bank, MASAF was the central pillar of the “Poverty Alleviation Programme” that Muluzi launched in August 1996. An infusion of US\$68 million from the World Bank in 1999 to ensure that the programme (MASAF II) would continue through 2003 transformed the programme into Malawi’s “major social safety net,” according to Maliro (2011).<sup>34</sup> Muluzi’s characterisation of MASAF, moreover, as a “delivery vehicle for reaching out to the masses” and “a true example of bottom-to-top democracy” further evidenced the president’s attempts to build up the UDF’s pro-poor brand.

Both SPS and MASAF benefitted poor Malawians who had generally been ignored under the *ancien régime*, yet their respective shortcomings perhaps limited their usefulness in driving a broader base of support for the ruling party. In the case of SPS, the effectiveness of the programme to target the poorest households was limited. Because of the untargeted (or universal) nature of the programme, much of the smallholder production was achieved by relatively wealthier households who had the requisite baseline of land and labour to cultivate a higher output.<sup>35</sup> As the 1998-1999 ODI review of the SPS concluded, many households at the more extreme end of the vulnerability spectrum received starter packs, but they lacked sufficient land on which to cultivate a yield sufficient enough to surmount food insecurity. Moreover, while SPS did enhance yield across many thousands of households, Malawi was still running a deficit of between 500,000 and 600,000 tonnes of maize every year.<sup>36</sup> While SPS undoubtedly improved conditions for farmers across the country who had suffered Banda’s exclusivist policies, the benefits were not sufficient to prompt a significant change in the party’s electoral support base.

---

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/ssc/n/TIP%20Archive%20CD/related%20materials/SP1/SPS1%20evaluation%20report/evaluation%20report.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Jane Harrigan, “Food Insecurity, Poverty and the Malawian Starter Pack: Fresh Start or False Start?,” *Food Policy* 33, no. 3 (June 2008): 245, doi:10.1016/j.foodpol.2007.09.001.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Devereux and Ian Macauslan, “Review of Social Protection Instruments in Malawi,” *Desk Study for DFID Malawi*, 2006, 4, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/MalawiSocialProtectionReview.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Longley, Coulter, and Thompson, “Malawi Rural Livelihoods Starter Pack Scheme 1998-99 Evaluation Report,” 42–43.

<sup>34</sup> Maliro, “Comparison of Agricultural Input Subsidies and Social Cash Transfers as Policies for Reducing Vulnerability to Hunger in Malawi,” 65.

<sup>35</sup> Devereux and Macauslan, “Review of Social Protection Instruments in Malawi,” 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 4.

Nor did the UDF seem able to translate benefits from the MASAF employment programmes into support from a wider base of voters. MASAF, like SPS, suffered from operational shortcomings, often failing to target communities with deeper levels of poverty. Kishindo (2000) found that Blantyre District—the South’s largest district and at the time a UDF stronghold—had received the largest proportion of MASAF funding in the country.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the fact that 45 percent of total MASAF spending went to projects in the South likely served only to reinforce Muluzi’s existing electoral support base. This programmatic reinforcement of regional loyalties in fact probably stymied the party’s attempts to foster a more geographically diverse mix of supporters.

Whatever improvements to food security that the Muluzi government had achieved through SPS were short-lived, however. Donor pressure forced the SPS to be scaled back to almost one-quarter of its original budget (US\$7.2 million) in 2001, according to Harrigan (2008), ostensibly out of concern that the programme was inhibiting rural livelihood diversification away from maize production.<sup>38</sup> Led by the IMF and USAID, these donors successfully pressured government to cancel SPS and adopt the more limited Targeted Input Programme (TIP) that could better target extreme poverty. The transition reduced yields to such a degree that total smallholder production owed to government subsidies fell from 16 to 3 percent.<sup>39</sup> In addition to decreasing overall food availability, the fall in output also sparked a near quintupling of maize prices from October 2001 to March 2002. For smallholder farmers who must rely on purchased maize during the lean months of the year (December-February), this price hike precipitated thousands of hunger-related deaths between 2000 and 2002, which was only partially mitigated by (late-arriving) emergency food aid totalling 195,000 tonnes in 2002.<sup>40</sup>

This crisis of the early decade deepened political elites’ suspicions that the donors could not be trusted to ensure Malawi’s food security.<sup>41</sup> With the 2004 election on the horizon, according to Chirwa and Dorward (2013), “fertiliser politics” became the main feature of the campaign.<sup>42</sup> While the donor agenda demanded greater austerity toward smallholder development, political elites including the UDF’s new presidential candidate Mutharika were undoubtedly considering different approaches.



<sup>37</sup> Paul Kishindo, “Community Project Funding in Malawi under the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) Demand-Driven Approach: Potential for Perpetuating Imbalances in Development,” *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 15, no. 1 (2000): 11–13.

<sup>38</sup> Harrigan, “Food Insecurity, Poverty and the Malawian Starter Pack,” 244.

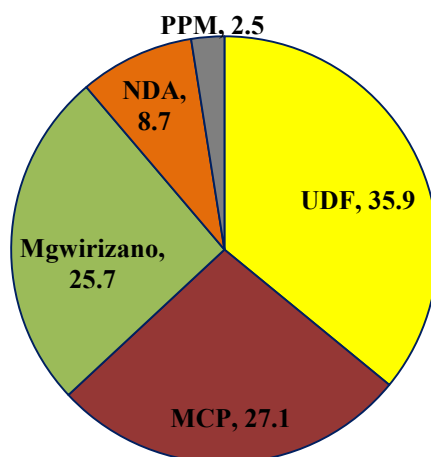
<sup>39</sup> Malawi’s GDP declined by 5.0 percent in 2001. Devereux and Macauslan, “Review of Social Protection Instruments in Malawi.”

<sup>40</sup> “Unravelling the ‘miracle’ of Malawi’s Green Revolution” (GRAIN, January 14, 2010), <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4075-unravelling-the-miracle-of-malawi-s-green-revolution>.

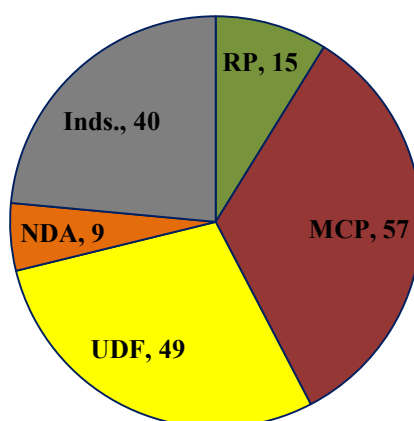
<sup>41</sup> Chinsinga, “The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy Processes in Malawi.”

<sup>42</sup> Chirwa and Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies*, 67–68.

### Presidential election results, 2004



### National Assembly election results, 2004



### Bingu wa Mutharika, champion of the smallholder farmer

With the announcement on 25 May that Bingu wa Mutharika had won the 2004 presidential election, Malawi was at the cusp of a new era. The UDF stalwart and co-founder of the party with Muluzi was the latter's choice to succeed him as president, especially after attempts to change the Constitution to allow for Muluzi to run for a third term were thwarted in the constitutional court.<sup>43</sup> Mutharika had trained overseas in Development Economics and served thereafter as a civil servant in Banda's MCP government.<sup>44</sup> But he soon became an activist against the government he purported to represent and thereafter was forced into exile in Zambia, joining that country's corps of technocratic elites. He joined the UDF in 1992 (before it became a sanctioned political party), having re-entered Malawi via postings as UN Director of Trade and Development Finance for Africa and as Secretary General of COMESA during the 1990s. After a falling out with Muluzi, Mutharika tested the waters of

<sup>43</sup> Janet Chikaya-Banda, "Duty of Care: Constitutional and Law Reform, in Malawi," *Africa Research Institute*, Policy Voices, September 2012.

<sup>44</sup> "Bingu Wa Mutharika | Biography - President of Malawi," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed May 28, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1016527/Bingu-wa-Mutharika>.



presidential politics in 1999 as the candidate for the United Party (which he founded), though he garnered less than 1 percent of the vote in the election. After a rapprochement between the two UDF men in 2000, a re-elected Muluzi tendered Mutharika a deputy governorship in the Reserve Bank of Malawi and later a cabinet position as Minister of Economic Planning and Development before hand-picking him as his presidential successor.

Following the food crisis of the early decade, food security was a top issue in the 2004 election.<sup>45</sup> Though both major parties supported input subsidies of some variety, language in the MCP manifesto suggested that the SPS had been “prone to waste and abuse” and that an MCP government would “work to implement targeted subsidies for those that [sic] really need them.”<sup>46</sup> For their part, the UDF had rebelled against the narrower TIP, promising in 2004 to implement a nationwide fertiliser subsidy—though, according to Booth *et al.* (2006), without having undertaken technical analysis of how it would be implemented.<sup>47</sup> Yet a new focus on fertiliser stood to resonate strongly with the populace. Longley *et al.* (1999), in their evaluation of the SPS, emphasised how “there is little doubt that there will be need for greatly increased inputs as suggested for the supply of fertilisers.”<sup>48</sup> In another study, Bookstein and Lawson (2002) recorded how in discussion groups in Zambia and Malawi, access to fertiliser was mentioned more often than even hunger as being a chief societal concern.<sup>49</sup>

Though Muluzi and Mutharika had just barely earned the UDF a presidential third term, their partnership ended within nine months of Mutharika’s entering office. Muluzi, who had been declared ineligible for a third term, took a page out of his Zambian counterpart Frederick Chiluba’s political playbook, campaigning on behalf of a hand-picked successor over whom he intended to wield ultimate control.<sup>50</sup> Intimating his intention to metaphorically keep the keys to the State House, Muluzi had after 2004 maintained his leadership of the party.<sup>51</sup> This allowed him to once again pen the opening letter of the UDF manifesto, though he did so without ever mentioning Mutharika’s name. Not many Malawians either expected to see Mutharika demonstrate ultimate leadership. Noted one observer, Mutharika “was seen as somebody who was going to be led by Muluzi.”<sup>52</sup> To the surprise of many observers therefore, Mutharika decided to disavow his patron Muluzi. In February 2005, while serving as state president, Mutharika resigned his membership in the UDF and founded the DPP.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to the intraparty competition that motivated the politically ambitious Mutharika to found the DPP, interparty competition also lowered the opportunity cost for the

---

<sup>45</sup> Chirwa and Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies*, 68. The fact that Mutharika won just 36 percent of the vote and the UDF less than a plurality of parliamentary seats suggests that political factors other than the fertiliser issue (e.g. regional patronage networks) largely determined the election outcome.

<sup>46</sup> MCP Election Manifesto, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> David Booth *et al.*, “Drivers of Change and Development in Malawi,” 2006, 22, <http://41.87.6.35:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/280>.

<sup>48</sup> Longley, Coulter, and Thompson, “Malawi Rural Livelihoods Starter Pack Scheme 1998-99 Evaluation Report,” 24.

<sup>49</sup> Amelia Bookstein and Max Lawson, “Briefing: Famine in Southern Africa,” *African Affairs* 101, no. 405 (October 1, 2002): 639.

<sup>50</sup> Daniel Vencovsky, “Presidential Term Limits in Africa,” 2007, 8, [http://reference.sabinet.co.za/webx/access/electronic\\_journals/accordc/accordc\\_2007\\_n2\\_a4.pdf](http://reference.sabinet.co.za/webx/access/electronic_journals/accordc/accordc_2007_n2_a4.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> In very few cases since 1994 has the president of the country not simultaneously served as president of his/her political party.

<sup>52</sup> “Malawi’s President Rules ‘His Way,’” *BBC*, September 1, 2004, sec. Africa, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3618948.stm>.

<sup>53</sup> Chikaya-Banda, “Duty of Care: Constitutional and Law Reform, in Malawi.”

new president to establish his own party. Though the UDF had claimed a third presidential victory in 2004, the party in the election lost its parliamentary plurality, winning 49 seats to the MCP's 57 seats (of 187 total seats) despite getting about 15,000 more votes. With such a weak mandate to rule, Mutharika suffered little risk to his personal political capital in divorcing himself from the UDF mantle.

Lacking much support in parliament and without grassroots party structures, Mutharika had little choice but to foster an electoral base that relied on policy performance in lieu of patronage politics. To achieve this goal, Mutharika cultivated a political brand that could appeal to the largest demographic of Malawians; i.e., smallholder farmers. Extending the food security platform that the UDF had fostered as a response to the Banda-MCP's restrictive agricultural policies, Mutharika marketed the DPP as Malawi's champion of smallholder farmers. Resonant with the fertiliser debate that had been a seminal part of the 2004 campaign, Mutharika chose for his DPP a party logo featuring four maize cobs, suggesting that food production would occupy the principal focus of his party's platform. Within the first three years of his presidency, moreover, Mutharika had taken over the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security portfolio himself, a post he retained until April 2010.<sup>54</sup> Remarking on his vision for the country, Mutharika declared:



In 2004, this government inherited an agricultural sector that was characterised by chronic food deficits and this resulted in perpetual food insecurity. In addition, the country did not have sufficient seed, particularly maize and relied heavily on seed importation. ... Right from the beginning, we had to convince Malawians that this country had the potential to feed itself.<sup>55</sup>

The fact also that Malawians were suffering in 2005 the worst drought in recent memory—farmers produced just 37 percent of the country's food requirement—meant that Mutharika's recognition of food security as a paramount issue proved particularly auspicious.<sup>56</sup>

The chief policy manifestation of Mutharika's food security brand was AISP. In advance of the 2005/06 growing season (December-April), the Mutharika government launched AISP with an infusion of US\$32 million, or about two-and-a-half times the government's expenditure on SPS in 1998/99. Each of the 2.8 million beneficiaries (about 50% of smallholder farmers) in the programme's first year was allotted vouchers that would subsidise two 50-kg bags of fertiliser and 2.0 kg of hybrid or 4.5 kg of open pollinated seed at a quarter of the market price.<sup>57</sup> As compared to SPS and TIP, the AISP packs were much larger and allowed more farmers the materials they needed to achieve food sufficiency, which was not to same degree the case with SPS.<sup>58</sup> Mutharika's decision to leverage such a considerable amount of funding to subsidies given Malawi's constrained budget space was risky, but it was only with this scope of financing that maize yields could elevate to the point of making Malawi's poor farmers self-sufficient. In the following fiscal year (2006/07),

<sup>54</sup> "Malawi Announces Cabinet Reshuffle," *Scotland Malawi Partnership*, May 11, 2007, <http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/news.html?newsid=34>.

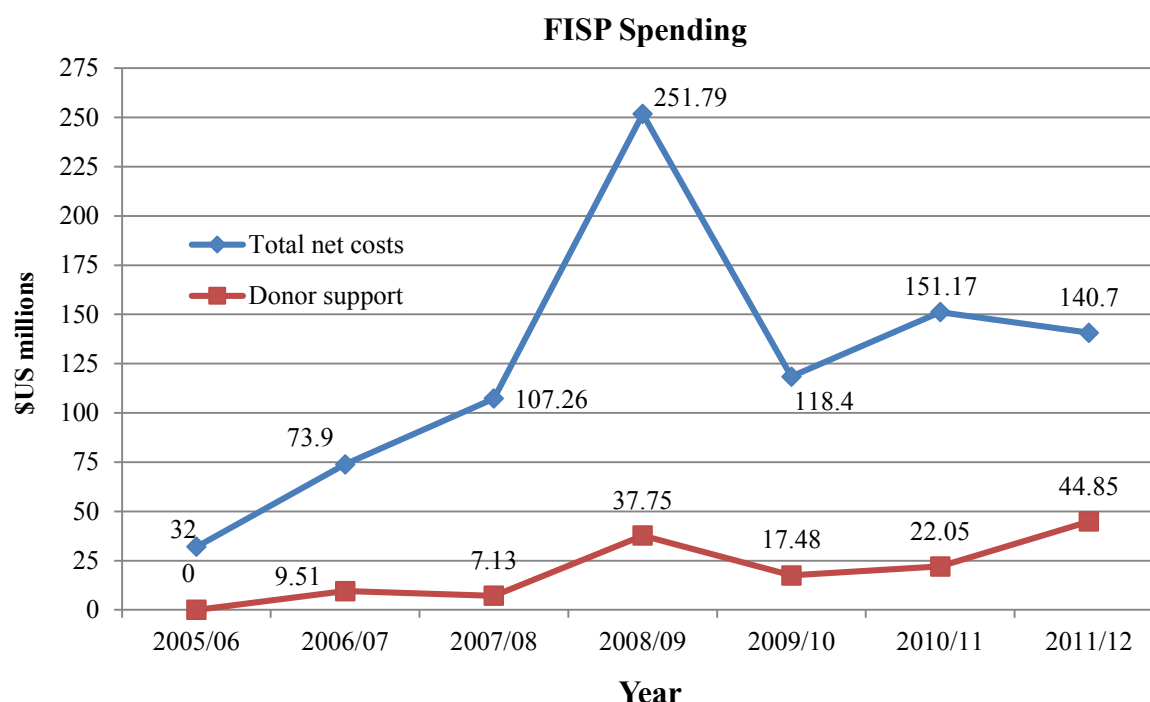
<sup>55</sup> State of the Nation Address, 2008.

<sup>56</sup> "Food Crises in Africa in the Last 30 Years," 2013, <http://www.harvesthelp.org.uk/>.

<sup>57</sup> "Unravelling the 'miracle' of Malawi's Green Revolution."

<sup>58</sup> Harrigan, "Food Insecurity, Poverty and the Malawian Starter Pack."

spending on AISP more than doubled to US\$73.9 million, comprising nearly half of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoAFS) budget and almost 7 percent of the national budget.<sup>59</sup>



The risk may have been high, but so was the reward, as it turned out. Maize yields more than doubled from 1.2 million metric tons in 2004/05 before the introduction of the subsidies to 2.7 million in 2005/06 and then 3.4 million in 2006/07.<sup>60</sup> Chirwa and Dorward (2013) found that households receiving subsidised fertilisers were able to achieve food adequacy in about 22-percent more cases than non-recipient households.<sup>61</sup> Food security on the whole increased for an estimated 67 percent of AISP farmers. Production for many smallholders was sufficient in fact to allow them to become net sellers of maize, able to market their surplus production during the year without having to purchase maize during the lean period.<sup>62</sup> For a nation that had run food production deficits for several years prior to 2005, the fact that the nation's farmers were thereafter growing surplus food year after year was a considerable change for the once perennially food-starved country.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, by the late 2000s, as Cammack (2012) noted, subsidies had allowed more smallholders farmers to produce tobacco and cotton, the export of which facilitated the rise of many farmers above smallholder status.<sup>64</sup> Mutharika had ensured the confidence of his people that Malawi would

<sup>59</sup> Chart adapted from Chirwa and Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies*, 120. Malawi's fiscal begins in July. Though the opportunity to join the DPP did motivate some MPs to defect from their parties along with Mutharika, the president in his early term still did not have a majority in parliament. To pass the budget each year therefore, the president lobbied (successfully) a number of independents and opposition members. Even with this effort, budgets often passed only with a slim majority. Interview with Maxton Tsoka, Lecturer, Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

<sup>60</sup> Maliro, "Comparison of Agricultural Input Subsidies and Social Cash Transfers as Policies for Reducing Vulnerability to Hunger in Malawi," 118.

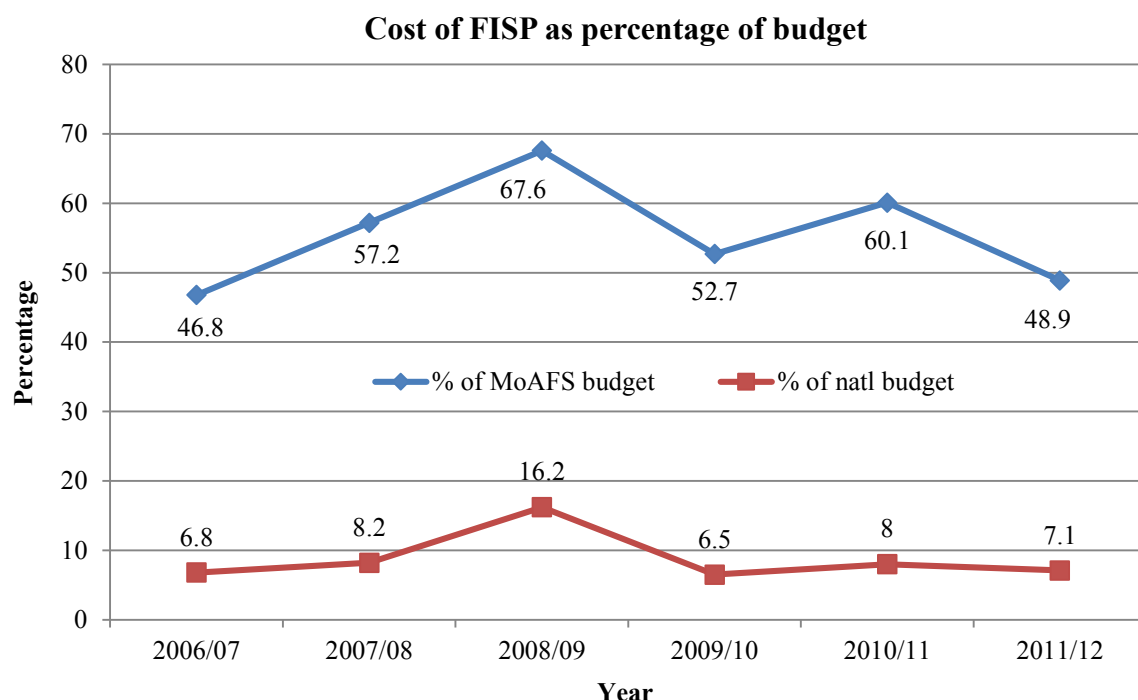
<sup>61</sup> Chirwa and Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies*, 133.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Andrew Dorward et al., "Evaluation of the 2012/13 Farm Input Subsidy Programme, Malawi," *Report Prepared for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Lilongwe*, 2013, 105, [http://wadonda.com/Dorward\\_et\\_al\\_2013\\_FISP\\_Evaluation\\_2012\\_13\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://wadonda.com/Dorward_et_al_2013_FISP_Evaluation_2012_13_Final_Report.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Diana Cammack, "Malawi in Crisis, 2011–12," *Review of African Political Economy* 39, no. 132 (June 1, 2012): 376, doi:10.1080/03056244.2012.688651.

not starve, but perhaps more powerful still was the belief that Malawi's farmers could grow themselves out of poverty.



### Mutharika and the donors

Not only did partisan competition from both intraparty and interparty sources provide strong impetus for Mutharika to brand himself around enhancing food productivity, but competition with donors over Malawi's development strategy underpinned the president's decision to champion smallholder farmers. When donors led by the IMF and USAID shifted tack in the early 2000s and pushed for the narrower TIP as a replacement for SPS, the price of maize rose significantly.<sup>65</sup> Muluzi at the time had acceded to the donor agenda, perhaps trusting that his robust support base in the Southern region would be sufficient to guarantee that the UDF would continue at the head of government. Indeed, despite the food crisis that had transpired under his watch in 2001-2002, Muluzi still enjoyed an 82-percent approval rating among Southerners in 2003, according to Afrobarometer data.<sup>66</sup> Mutharika, by contrast, lacked the grassroots support that Muluzi had enjoyed, especially once he had dropped the UDF mantle. According to the Afrobarometer survey recorded in 2005, the newly-minted DPP leader had just a 48-percent approval rating among southerners. Mutharika's political career could thus ill-afford another food-related catastrophe like the ones that had occurred earlier in the decade. With fertiliser subsidies having been a seminal election issue in 2004, moreover, inaction was not a realistic option. The incentives were therefore aligned for Mutharika to pursue an input subsidy programme that was of a much grander scope than what Muluzi before him had attempted.

Though upsetting the donors carried with it the risk of losing the critical budgetary support that sustains Malawi's public programmes, Mutharika determined nonetheless that the risk was justified. For Mutharika, subsidies were a means by which the nation could emerge from donor dependency and enhance national pride. As the president enunciated in

<sup>65</sup> Chinsinga, "Reclaiming Policy Space," 13.

<sup>66</sup> See Ferree and Horowitz, "Ties That Bind?," 551 for survey data.

his 2008 State of the Nation Address, “Government placed the highest priority on agriculture to guarantee national and household food security ... because a nation that depends on others for food cannot achieve ‘national sovereignty.’”<sup>67</sup> Following a poor crop season in 2004-2005 from which nearly 40 percent of the country (5 million people) became unable to meet their basic food needs, Mutharika decided that he would take Malawi on a bolder policy course than any that had been followed before.<sup>68</sup> When the donors insisted in 2005 that the government accept more food aid instead of offering subsidies, the president reportedly declared, “Enough is enough. I am not going to go on my knees to beg for food. Let us grow the food ourselves.”<sup>69</sup>

Following the first round of fertiliser subsidies in 2005, after which it became clear that Mutharika would not be changing tack, the donors began to provide limited financial support for AISP/FISP. Ahead of the 2009 election, the first test for the DPP, Mutharika defended his insistence on offering subsidies to smallholder farmers:

I knew we were right. If you look at the smallholder farmers here, using a hoe... I mean a poor woman with a baby on her back, struggling the whole day and she cannot afford to buy improved seeds, she cannot afford to buy fertilisers ... she cannot even afford small improvements in agricultural implements other than a hoe and then you [the development partners] come and say ‘that woman does not need subsidy.’ Then you take the farmers in Europe and North America with modern trucks ... you say they need subsidy and this woman doesn’t? ... I say ‘No, they are not serious.... With or without your support, I’ll go ahead and do it anyway.’<sup>70</sup>

Goodall Gondwe, the longstanding Minister of Finance and architect of AISP, echoed Mutharika’s insistence that all Malawians be empowered to grow food themselves. In his 2007-2008 Budget Address, Gondwe reflected on how AISP had driven a “huge increase in our maize production ... a remarkable achievement for the country.” He noted further how Malawians “no longer have to beg for handouts from our neighbours or our overseas friends.” Fertiliser subsidies, he declared further, were “transforming the country, beginning with maize, from a consuming and importing country to a producing and exporting country.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the boon to maize yields over the first three years of the programme had allowed MoAFS to purchase 400,000 tonnes of surplus maize for export to Zimbabwe, Kenya, and other neighbouring countries facing drought.<sup>72</sup>

## The Mutharika brand and the 2009 presidential election

Three aspects of political competition thus precipitated Mutharika’s efforts to foster a political brand around food security. **First**, intraparty competition between Muluzi and Mutharika prompted the latter to assert his independence through the founding of a new

<sup>67</sup> State of the Nation Address, 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Chirwa and Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies*, 161. Gondwe in his 2006 Budget Address called the mid-decade drought “one of the worst disasters in [Malawi’s] history, when daily, many Malawians were subjected to living dangerously close to death.” See Teresa Buerkle, “Malawi Facing Serious Food Crisis: More than 4.2 Million People in Need of Assistance,” *FAO Newsroom*, August 11, 2005, <http://www.fao.org/Newsroom/en/news/2005/107298/index.html>. <http://www.fao.org/Newsroom/en/news/2005/107298/index.html>

<sup>69</sup> “Unravelling the ‘miracle’ of Malawi’s Green Revolution.”

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Bingu wa Mutharika. See *EXCLUSIVE: Malawi President - Bingu Wa Mutharika*, 2009, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mzi\\_5iOVixc&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mzi_5iOVixc&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

<sup>71</sup> Budget Address, 2007-2008. See <http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d00365/>

<sup>72</sup> Chirwa and Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies*, 150.

political party. Mutharika inherited the UDF's redistributive food security platform, expanded it through programmatic and symbolic means, and cultivated it as a new political brand around the DPP. **Second**, interparty competition forced Mutharika to abandon the strategy of patronage politics that had driven electoral outcomes over the past decade because his upstart DPP had no established grassroots support. The intense interparty competition reflected in the 2004 presidential election result also lowered the cost to Mutharika's defection from the UDF as he did not inherit a plurality (let alone a majority) in the National Assembly. **Third**, competition between the Mutharika government and the IMF-led donors who had put Malawi on a course of limited agricultural development with disastrous unintended consequences earlier in the decade spurred Mutharika to assert his independence through bold policies that defied the agenda of these donors. Mutharika's decision to forge a unilateral development agenda further burnished his credentials as Malawi's food production president.

The president's political and financial gamble in unilaterally implementing AISP bore fruit. Whereas in 2004-2005 the nation faced the prospect of famine, within two years the country's smallholder farmers were producing enough maize to feed themselves. The president's popularity among the rural masses soared, Chirwa and Dorward noted.<sup>73</sup> Mutharika soon acquired popular monikers such as *Mose wa lero* ("a modern Moses") for his ability to deliver the people from food insecurity and *Chitsulo cha njanji* ("an iron rail") for having confronted the IMF and other development partners who had insisted Malawi take a more conservative course.<sup>74</sup> East China Normal University in 2010 awarded the president an honorary professorship in Economics for his development vision, for which Mutharika thereafter stylised himself as "Professor."<sup>75</sup> This title soon accompanied *Ngwazi* (the "Conqueror") for his having conquered hunger, a title which Mutharika apparently adopted himself but one that nonetheless entered public discourse.<sup>76</sup> This title, which only the autocratic Banda had embraced before Mutharika and foreshadowed the latter's more authoritarian path, came to Mutharika by way of the Ngoni tribe who inhabit the Northern and Central regions of Malawi. The fact that Mutharika, who was Lomwe by tribe and a southerner, stylised himself *Ngwazi* suggests perhaps how the president intended to appeal to a geographically broader array of voters.

In the lead-up to the 2009 election, Mutharika as presidential candidate for the DPP upped the government's ante in promoting agricultural self-sufficiency. The prior year, the DPP government scaled up spending on AISP to more than 230 percent of what it had spent on inputs during the prior fiscal year (2007/08). The approximately US\$250 million that government spent on subsidies in that year alone comprised more than 16 percent of all government expenditure, exceeding the budgets of entire ministries including that of Health and Education (respectively).<sup>77</sup> Much of Mutharika's campaign was also focused on his government's food production achievements. In the DPP's 2009 election manifesto, Mutharika declared that the government would "ensure that we feed ourselves ... continuing its policy focus towards enabling more people to grow their own food."<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>74</sup> Wellman Kondowe, "Presidents and Ideologies: A Transitivity Analysis of Bingu wa Mutharika's Inaugural Address," *International Journal of Language and Linguistics* 2, no. 3 (2014): 177, doi:10.11648/j.ijll.20140203.16.

<sup>75</sup> Z. Allan Ntata, *Trappings of Power: Political Leadership in Africa* (AuthorHouse, 2012), xviii.

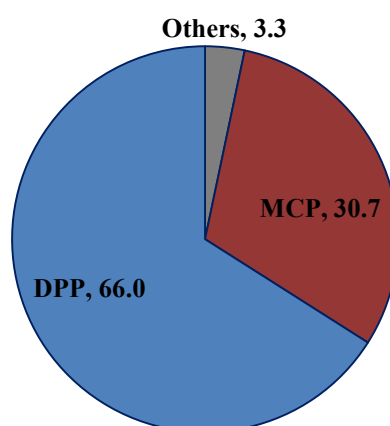
<sup>76</sup> Reuben Makayiko Chirambo, "Democracy as a Limiting Factor for Politicised Cultural Populism in Malawi," *Africa Spectrum*, 2009, 87.

<sup>77</sup> Maliro, "Comparison of Agricultural Input Subsidies and Social Cash Transfers as Policies for Reducing Vulnerability to Hunger in Malawi," 135.

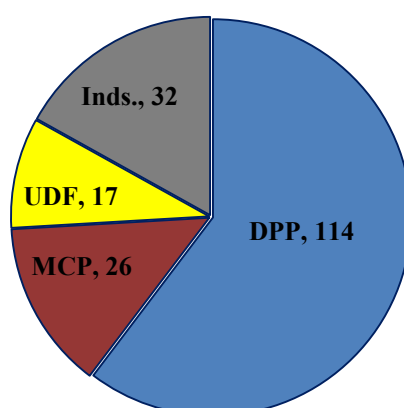
<sup>78</sup> DPP Election Manifesto, 2009.

government announced before the election that it would be increasing the rate of subsidy from 75 to 90 percent, providing a strong incentive, argued Maliro (2011), for smallholder farmers to support the DPP in 2009.

### Presidential election results, 2009



### National Assembly election results, 2009



### Malawi's economic collapse and the fall of Bingu wa Mutharika, 2009-2012

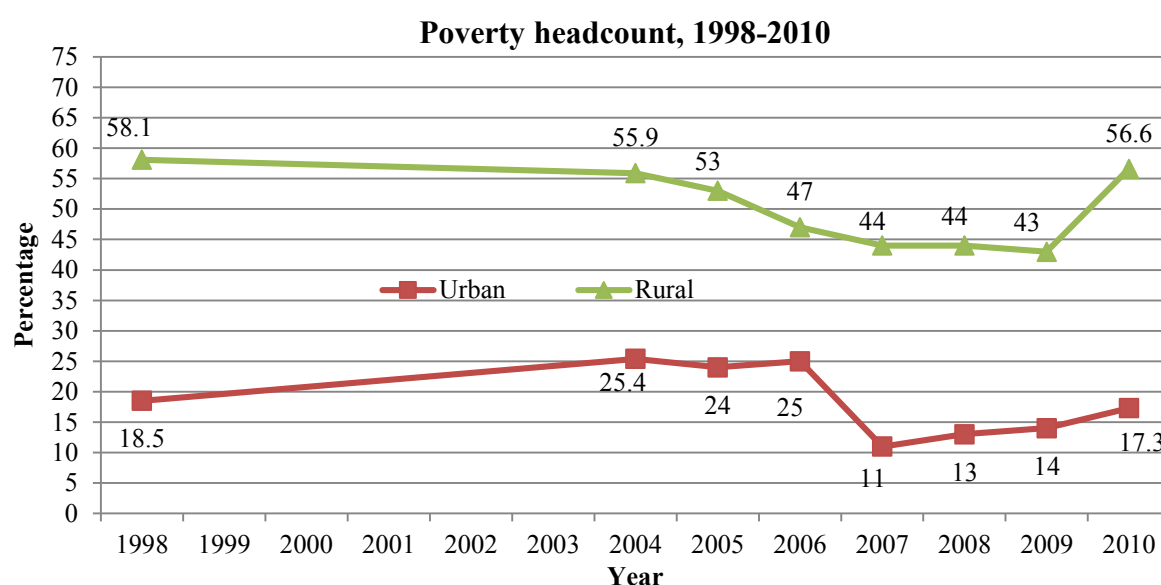
Following the 2009 election in which voters overwhelmingly returned the Mutharika to the presidency and elected 114 of the DPP's parliamentary candidates, a once-ascendant Malawi began to slip into social discord. Whereas political competition had motivated the president to advance a policy vision based on national food security, Mutharika in his second term, Chinsinga and Poulton (2014) argued, lost the political incentive to lead a government predicated on performance and not patronage.<sup>79</sup> As Shawa (2012) and many others have documented, Mutharika after 2009 adopted an increasingly "big man" style of politics.<sup>80</sup> Mutharika's decision to purchase a presidential jet and mausoleum with public funds, his

<sup>79</sup> Chinsinga and Poulton, "Beyond Technocratic Debates."

<sup>80</sup> Lester Brian Shawa, "The Big-Man Syndrome as a Security Threat in Malawi: A Critical Theory Perspective.," *Southern African Peace and Security Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 44–56.

shuttering of Chancellor College when faculty there made critical statements about his leadership, and his attempt to position his brother Peter Mutharika—a law professor in the United States who had returned to Malawi to become a Cabinet minister—as presumptive DPP presidential candidate in 2014 were just some of the ways in which Mutharika deepened public criticism of his leadership, especially among the urban middle class and international observers.

Whatever popularity Mutharika had fostered by the end of his first term was quickly eroding in his second term. Mutharika’s decision to impose national price floors on burley tobacco, ostensibly to support smallholder farmers, backfired when wholesalers refused to pay high prices and left the country. Without tobacco sales, which are Malawi’s principal source of foreign exchange, currency reserves plummeted and the government could no longer import sufficient quantities of petroleum, medicine, and manufacturing inputs. Cammack (2012) noted too how many farmers who had expanded into commercial production with the help of fertiliser subsidies suffered as the country lacked sufficient fuel that they needed to bring their crops to market.<sup>81</sup> Government also faced challenges in transporting fertiliser to rural markets for sale. The economic and social consequences of Mutharika’s brazenness proved dire. Hospitals exhausted medical supplies, factories shuttered, and taxis queued for days in wait for fuel, spurring protests. Mutharika lost further credibility when suppression of the 20-21 July 2011 protests in several cities resulted in the deaths of 20 people.<sup>82</sup>



Turmoil in the economy as well as the diminishing marginal returns of FISP—which had faced procedural issues for years—also proceeded to erase the reductions to poverty that the Mutharika government had theretofore achieved. Growth of the economy, which had reached an impressive rate of nine percent in the mid-2000s, had by 2012 slipped to nearly four percent.<sup>83</sup> Poverty also had fallen during Mutharika’s first term, but slippages in growth forced many tens of thousands of vulnerable Malawians back into poverty, especially in the rural areas.<sup>84</sup> The 2010/11 Integrated Household Survey (IHS) showed that the national

<sup>81</sup> Cammack, “Malawi in Crisis, 2011–12,” 376.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Dorward et al., “Evaluation of the 2012/13 Farm Input Subsidy Programme, Malawi.”

<sup>84</sup> Adapted from Chirwa and Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies*, 163.



poverty rate (50.7%) had decreased only marginally since 2004/5 (52.4%).<sup>85</sup> This was likely because, as Dorward and Chirwa concluded in a 2013 evaluation of the programme, FISP “helps poor people with problems of food insecurity ... but the scale of the programme ... is not large enough to ... allow people to advance their livelihoods. This may be characterised as helping people to ‘hang in’ but not ‘step up’ or ‘step out’ [from poverty].”<sup>86</sup> FISP may have saved lives, but the fact that it had not resulted in changes to the structure of the economy left most Malawians unable to emerge from livelihood insecurity.

With Malawi’s economy in a tailspin, the country was desperate for stability to return. Yet Mutharika in 2011, as he had in 2005, once again spurned the IMF-led development partners when they tried to intervene in the country’s economic affairs. The IMF, having declared the kwacha to be overvalued, offered the Malawian government a US\$79 million relief package in exchange for the government’s devaluation of the currency. Mutharika balked, claiming that “unless the IMF tells me how I will protect my people, I will not devalue the Kwacha.”<sup>87</sup> Prices continued to increase and shortages worsened when the donors decided to withhold all direct foreign budgetary assistance to the government in the 2011-12 fiscal year, highly problematic for a country that relies on donors to supply about 40 percent of its annual budget.<sup>88</sup> Mutharika exacerbated the situation when he expelled the British High Commissioner, who had criticised the president for “becoming ever more autocratic and intolerant of criticism.”<sup>89</sup> As a result, Britain withdrew about US\$30 million in aid from Malawi. The president, who by this time had well established as part of his leadership brand a resistance to foreign involvement in Malawi’s economic affairs, publicly embraced the donor freeze as part of his “Zero-Deficit Budget” to get the country on a path to financial independence.<sup>90</sup> But when on 5 March 2012 Mutharika told a group of development partner representatives to “go to hell,” every Malawian recognised that the country was indeed on shaky footing.<sup>91</sup>

Then suddenly, to the shock of all, though perhaps not to their dismay, President Mutharika suffered a heart attack and died on 5 April 2012.

### **Joyce Banda and Malawi’s newest “pro-poor” brand**

After Mutharika’s death, a very different kind of leader emerged to take his place. It was clear that the vice-president Joyce Banda, who was sworn in as president on 7 April, would bring a different approach to national governance as compared to her high-handed predecessor. “The Joyce Banda I have come to know,” commented blogger Kondwani Munthali shortly after the new president had entered office, “is the mother who speaks on empowering the poor ... who removed all the trappings of the Vice Presidency and went to

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Dorward et al., “Evaluation of the 2012/13 Farm Input Subsidy Programme, Malawi,” 103.

<sup>87</sup> “Bingu Rejects IMF Devaluation Call, Speaks on Fuel Crisis,” accessed June 9, 2015, <http://maravi.blogspot.com/2011/06/nyasatimes-bingu-rejects-imf.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Anthony Ware, *Development in Difficult Sociopolitical Contexts: Fragile, Failed, Pariah* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 128.

<sup>89</sup> Mwangi S. Kimenyi, “The Erosion of Democracy in Malawi: President Bingu Wa Mutharika’s Unholy Conversion,” *The Brookings Institution*, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/03/09-democracy-malawi-kimenyi>.

<sup>90</sup> Blessings Chinsinga, “The Reality of the Zero-Aid Budget in Malawi,” *Effective States*, accessed June 13, 2015, <http://www.effective-states.org/the-reality-of-the-zero-aid-budget-in-malawi/>.

<sup>91</sup> Kimenyi, “The Erosion of Democracy in Malawi.”

sit down on a mat in Ndirande to console a ... victim of Police brutality.”<sup>92</sup> Against the backdrop of Mutharika’s ostentation and the spiralling state of the economy, it seemed that Banda would offer the succour that the nation’s poor majority needed.

Mutharika had chosen Banda as his running mate in 2009 to “support women in the country and because of her experience,” but the president had little interest in keeping Banda around once the election had ended.<sup>93</sup> When the vice-president would not kowtow to Mutharika’s wishes that she endorse his brother Peter to be the next DPP nominee, the president ejected her from the party in December 2010. Despite her banishment from the DPP, Banda resisted calls for her resignation, declaring that “her responsibility ... constitutionally mandates her to fight for the well being [*sic*] of the ordinary Malawian.”<sup>94</sup> It was this dedication to the welfare of Malawi’s ordinary citizens—a stark contrast with what Mutharika had offered the country in his final years—that characterised the Banda political brand.

As had been the case in the mid-2000s, circumstances of political competition shaped how Banda came to market her particular vision for the country. When competition within the DPP forced her out of the party, Banda took a page out of Mutharika’s own political playbook and in September 2011 founded the People’s Party (PP) with herself as party president. Interparty competition too moved Banda to project a different kind of brand. With three major parties, each of which having provided Malawi with one of its presidents, dominating the electoral space, Banda’s ambitions for a presidential term of her own in 2014 necessitated that she demonstrate to the electorate how her PP would be distinctive of what the other parties could offer. Distancing herself from her more socially elite peers, Banda professed to best understand the challenges that ordinary Malawians face:

I know the kind of suffering that women are going through in this country. Their suffering does not need any introduction to me. I am the best advocate of the poor because I know what poverty is. I have fought against this, and will continue to fight.<sup>95</sup>

Banda’s pursuit of a “pro-poor” agenda as president proceeded from a career spent advocating for improvements to the welfare of poor Malawians. A Yao and native of Zomba District in Malawi’s Central region, Banda’s ability to overcome significant odds and achieve social and material success underlay her dedication to helping others surmount the kinds of challenges she had faced. Banda managed to finish secondary school all while mothering three children by the age of 25.<sup>96</sup> She thereafter left an abusive marriage, remarried, and opened a textile manufacturing company workshop that came to employ over one hundred people. The future president was by this point “empowered on many levels” and made it her “mission in life to assist women and youth to gain social and political empowerment.”<sup>97</sup> In the

---

<sup>92</sup> Ndirande is a peri-urban township in Blantyre District that is widely known for its high level of poverty.

<sup>93</sup> “Malawi Leader Chooses Foreign Minister as Running Mate,” *Reuters*, February 6, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/02/06/ozatp-malawi-election-idAFJOE5150KO20090206>.

<sup>94</sup> “Malawi: Vice President Joyce Banda Launches New Party,” accessed June 3, 2015, <http://vibeghana.com/2011/09/08/malawi-president-joyce-banda-launches-new-party/>.

<sup>95</sup> “JB Attacks Poverty: ‘I Know Malawians Are Suffering,’” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/07/22/jb-attacks-poverty-i-know-malawians-are-suffering/>.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Joyce Banda, in “Why We Care,” accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.why-we-care.org/global-leaders-council/joyce-banda>.

<sup>97</sup> *President Joyce Banda on Women’s Health & Empowerment in Malawi*, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzcoHYNR0yA&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzcoHYNR0yA&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

1980s, Banda founded the National Association of Business Women (NABW)—the largest network of rural women in the country with more than 50,000 members—and co-founded the Young Women Leaders Network and the Hunger Project.<sup>98</sup> The Joyce Banda Foundation, which since 1997 has provided meals and care for thousands of orphans and vulnerable children, earned Banda a Goodwill Ambassadorship for Safe Motherhood from the African Union.<sup>99</sup>

The future president's decision to join politics was as an outgrowth of her work as an activist and philanthropist. "For me," Banda noted, "the motivation in taking up that opportunity [to pursue a career in politics] was to be involved in influencing laws that have a big impact on women and children."<sup>100</sup> Banda entered politics in the 1990s as an MP with the UDF and joined the DPP in the mid-2000s.<sup>101</sup> She entered Cabinet mid-way through Mutharika's first term, first as Minister of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Development and then as Minister of Foreign Affairs before being elected the vice-president in 2009. Despite her rapid climb up the political ladder, Banda drew condemnation from political rivals who insinuated that her background did not befit a president. "She will never be president," commented Mutharika's widow and government official Callista Chimombo.<sup>102</sup> "How can a *mandasi* [fritter] seller be president?" But Banda turned around the characterisation, declaring that "she is right, because I've spent thirty years of my life empowering rural women. If I am aligned with the majority of women who struggle everyday ... that's fine, that's my mission."<sup>103</sup> Whereas her predecessor Mutharika had been a bombastic male leader and technocrat, Banda efforts to portray herself as sympathetic to the plight of poor women offered Malawian politics a new presidential brand.

Banda indicated in her first State of the Nation Address (May 2012) how her government would be different from that of her predecessor. If Mutharika's presidency had centred on food security and corruption, the new president declared how the "main policy thrust of this Administration [will be] ... transforming the structure of the economy in order to achieve economic growth, accelerated job creation and the protection of the vulnerable and the excluded." To this end, Banda declared that she would pursue a "people's development agenda that ... overcomes poverty through its political, social and economic programs." Banda in her address also made a populist appeal to the masses of whom she was purportedly a member: "As a Malawian woman who knows the humiliation of Malawian women; as a Malawian who has championed the plight of rural poor," Banda announced that she would champion the causes of those Malawians who had fallen through the cracks under Mutharika.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>98</sup> "The Journey of Dr Joyce Hilda Banda, the President of Malawi," *Women Presidents*, accessed March 16, 2015, <https://wethewomenourjourneys.wordpress.com/2013/11/28/dr-joyce-hilda-banda-the-president-of-malawi/>.

<sup>99</sup> Joyce Banda interview in "Why We Care."

<sup>100</sup> Joyce Banda, Malawi's former President Dr Joyce Banda on life in politics, November 24, 2014, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2014/11/24/interview-malawis-former-president-dr-joyce-banda-on-life-in-politics/>.

<sup>101</sup> Jonathan Said and Khwima Singini, "The Political Economy Determinants of Economic Growth in Malawi" (BWPI, The University of Manchester, 2014), 15, [http://businessenvironment.org/dyn/be/docs/291/esid\\_wp\\_40\\_said\\_singini.pdf](http://businessenvironment.org/dyn/be/docs/291/esid_wp_40_said_singini.pdf).

<sup>102</sup> Raphael Tenthami BBC News and Blantyre, "Joyce Banda: Malawi's First Female President," *BBC News*, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17662916>.

<sup>103</sup> *Madam President: Meeting Malawi's Joyce Banda*, 2012, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBmaeOM1omY&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBmaeOM1omY&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

<sup>104</sup> State of the Nation Address, 2012.

## Banda, the development community's "darling"

Though the new president maintained that it was her enduring mission to support Malawi's most marginalised groups, economic exigencies pulled Banda away from her self-prescribed duties to alleviate poverty and empower women. With the economy in a tailspin, Banda in her 2012 State of the Nation promised to devote urgent attention to the "foreign exchange shortage, tobacco industry crisis, fuel shortages, energy crisis, bad governance and poor human rights record, unemployment and diplomatic crisis among others."<sup>105</sup> The president proposed as part of her Short Term Economic Recovery Plan to "liberalise our currency and to restore our relations with the international community." Just weeks into her presidency, Banda agreed to a package with the IMF and World Bank in which government would adopt a floating exchange rate and devalue the kwacha by 33 percent.<sup>106</sup> Once the kwacha had been devalued, fuel, medicine, and electricity flowed back into the country. The new president also reversed several Mutharika-sponsored laws curtailing political freedoms, which prompted the return of budget support from the development partners.<sup>107</sup> Whereas Mutharika had shunned the IMF and other donors' involvement in Malawian economic affairs in 2005 and 2011, Banda took an antithetical approach. For her conciliatory attitude toward Malawi's development partners and for her progressive stance on women's rights, Banda became something of a "development darling" in the international community.<sup>108</sup>

While Banda insisted that structural adjustment was a necessary step, the on-the-ground effects of devaluation clashed with the pro-poor brand she had brought to government. Devaluation had begotten massive inflation and soaring prices made many of the goods that poor Malawians rely on unaffordable. The price of maize, for instance, skyrocketed from US\$7 per 50kg bag prior to May 2012 to nearly US\$13 by the end of the year.<sup>109</sup> The country's smallholder farmers were not able to grow their way out of food insecurity that year with the World Food Programme reporting that by year's end 1.63 million people (11% of the population) faced severe food shortages.<sup>110</sup> Urban dwellers were also hard hit when fuel prices climbed 150 percent in a matter of months. Inflated prices moved civil servants to strike for higher wages until government agreed to salary increases of on average 19 percent.<sup>111</sup> Disgruntled Malawians took to the streets in January and February 2013, protesting sustained high prices and what they perceived to be Banda's careless concessions to the IMF.

Banda strove to convince her constituents that her actions were necessary given the perilous state of the economy she had inherited from the previous government. The president

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> The government devalued the currency on 7 May 2012, exactly one month after Banda took office. World Bank, "Malawi Public Expenditure Review," Poverty Reduction and Economic Management 1 Africa Region, November 2013, 3.

<sup>107</sup> "Joyce Banda Has Bigger Problems than Madonna," *Africa Is a Country*, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://africasacountry.com/joyce-banda-madonna/>. Budgetary support to Malawi comes from a consortium of donors organised as the Common Approach to Budget Support (CABS). The individual donors as of 2013 were the European Union, UK Aid, the World Bank, the Norwegian government, the German government (KfW), the African Development Bank, and Irish Aid. Budget Address, 2013.

<sup>108</sup> Ware, *Development in Difficult Sociopolitical Contexts*, 128.

<sup>109</sup> "IMF Reforms Spark Malawi Consumer Backlash," *Equal Times*, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www.equaltimes.org/imf-reforms-spark-malawi-consumer-backlash>.

<sup>110</sup> Masimba Tafirenyika, "What Went Wrong? Lessons from Malawi's Food Crisis" (Africa Renewal Online, January 2013), <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/january-2013/what-went-wrong-lessons-malawi%E2%80%99s-food-crisis>.

<sup>111</sup> World Bank, "Malawi Public Expenditure Review," 8.

noted in one interview how she had signs produced in every one of Malawi's languages, explaining how she had needed to give the Malawian economy—which she analogised as a fever patient—an injection that would hurt initially but ultimately prove beneficial for the nation.<sup>112</sup> But the president did not stop at rhetoric and took actions to demonstrate her sympathy with the suffering she saw Malawians facing:

To get back on track, we needed to make some bold decisions ... that resulted in some negative impact on the poor and therefore we had to come up with the social programmes that cushioned that shock. ... Even if it costs me the next elections ... all I wanted to do at the end of the day is to demonstrate to my fellow Malawians that I am prepared to suffer with them.<sup>113</sup>

To this end, Banda ordered the government to shed its fleet of Mercedes-Benz automobiles and she reduced her own salary by one-third. She also sold the airplane Mutharika had purchased, applying the US\$15 million in proceeds to purchase maize and farm inputs for vulnerable citizens.<sup>114</sup> “I had to look at the situation of my fellow Malawians. If we are going to ask Malawians to make sacrifices, I must be the first to do it,” Banda noted. Paradoxically perhaps, it was the effects of Banda's economic austerity policies that allowed the president to highlight further her compassion for poverty reduction.

To demonstrate further her commitment to fixing the economy while also softening the blow from the effects of devaluation, Banda increased government's investment in several donor-driven social protection programmes.<sup>115</sup> “I asked them [the World Bank] to provide resources in order for us to implement public works programs, cash transfer programs, school feeding programs,” Banda noted, “to ensure that we take care of the shock of the devaluation.”<sup>116</sup> Beginning in late 2012, the government scaled up the Public Works Programme (PWP), organised through MASAF, by US\$2.5 million.<sup>117</sup> The Social Cash Transfer scheme, School Feeding programme, and FISP were also scaled up in conjunction with the passage of the National Social Support Policy in July 2012.<sup>118</sup> Banda was apparently “very euphoric [*sic*] on how the social protection programme has ... acted as a cushion

---

<sup>112</sup> Joyce Banda, Talk Africa: Live interview with Dr. Joyce Banda, August 28, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yS0FR2XDDSU>.

<sup>113</sup> “Malawi Leader Defends China Links, Tells the West: ‘Don’t Tell Us What to Do’,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/03/22/malawi-leader-defends-china-links-tells-the-west-dont-tell-us-what-to-do/>.

<sup>114</sup> “Malawi Sells Presidential Jet to Feed Poor,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/malawi-sells-presidential-jet-to-feed-poor-20130906-2t944.html>.

<sup>115</sup> World Bank, “Malawi Public Expenditure Review,” 8.

<sup>116</sup> “President Banda Outlines Her Vision for Malawi,” *VOA*, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/president-banda-outlines-her-vision-for-malawi/1588981.html>.

<sup>117</sup> MASAF had by this point been renamed the Local Development Fund (LDF). “Malawi President Launches K10bn Public Works Programme: Economic Recovery,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed May 25, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/12/09/malawi-president-launches-k10bn-public-works-programme-economic-recovery/>.

<sup>118</sup> World Bank, “Malawi Public Expenditure Review,” 45; Republic of Malawi, “National Social Support Policy,” July 2012.

Though the president in several public speeches touted her government's commitment to the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) scheme, in reality the programme did not markedly increase during her presidency. A pilot programme in Mchinji District since 2006, the government contributed 10 percent of the programme's budget through the Ministry of Gender. SCT was on paper set to expand to all of Malawi's 28 districts by the end of 2014. However, expansion did not occur to more than 7 districts before the May 2014, suggesting that Banda's stated enthusiasm for the donor agenda did not necessarily reflect her dedication to its immediate implementation. Interviews with several development partner representatives including Patience Kanje (KfW), Chipso Msowoya (EU), and Lovely Chizimba (Irish Aid).

against devaluation.”<sup>119</sup> She did not acknowledge however, as MP George Chaponda of the DPP pointed out in one parliamentary debate, that without exception these programmes had been initiated under previous governments.<sup>120</sup>

In addition to scaling up donor-funded programmes, Banda implemented through her presidential office a separate set of social protection initiatives that could supplement her “pro-poor” credentials, especially amongst women. “While I’m trying to bring the country back on track,” Banda explained, “I’m also very mindful of my mission—to make sure that I continue to empower women.... For me, that is what being a leader is all about.”<sup>121</sup> Within one month of becoming president, Banda launched her Presidential Initiative on Maternal Health and Safe Motherhood that, among other ends, reduced childhood mortality by establishing “safe mother motherhood committees” that supported pregnant women and infants.<sup>122</sup> In her third month as president, Banda launched the Presidential Initiative on Poverty and Hunger Reduction (PIPaHR), a poverty alleviation programme that principally targeted rural women.<sup>123</sup> Banda announced in her May 2013 State of the Nation Address that PIPaHR had in the prior year benefitted 100,000 farmers with distribution of 1,570 metric tonnes of legume seeds.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> Chaponda, Response to the State of the Nation Address, Parliamentary Hansards, 20 May 2013.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Janet Fleischman and Julia Nagel, “President Joyce Banda: New Focus on Women’s Health and Empowerment in Malawi,” January 8, 2013, <http://www.smartglobalhealth.org/blog/entry/president-joyce-banda-new-focus-on-womens-health-and-empowerment-in-malawi/>.

During her presidency, Banda did not initiate any social protection programmes through government ministries, but rather pursued poverty reduction through her presidential office. Attempting to explain this decision, Said and Singini (2014) contended that a newly inaugurated Banda faced an entrenched DPP-appointed bureaucracy that was deeply loyal to the deceased Mutharika and the party’s new president, Peter Mutharika, and did not therefore trust bureaucrats to implement her (proposed) agenda. Said and Singini, “The Political Economy Determinants of Economic Growth in Malawi,” 25.

<sup>122</sup> “Malawi’s Leader Makes Safe Childbirth Her Mission,” *Opinionator*, accessed May 20, 2015, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/06/malawis-leader-makes-safe-childbirth-her-mission/>.

<sup>123</sup> “Presidential Initiative on Hunger Reduction to Realize K7 Billion | Banthu Times: Breaking News, Sports, Business, Entertainment, Online Malawi News,” accessed March 18, 2015, <http://banthutimes.com/presidential-initiative-on-hunger-reduction-to-realize-k7-billion/>.

<sup>124</sup> State of the Nation Address, 2013. There are no published statistics on PIPaHR or other programmes that emanated from Banda’s presidential office.

### *Cow-a-Family initiative*

One PIPaHR programme that became strongly associated with the president ahead of the 2014 election was the Cow-a-Family programme. Announcing the launch of the programme in the peri-urban township of Namitete outside the capital city Lilongwe, Banda declared once more her commitment to eradicating poverty and hunger as her “main priority” and articulated how she believed Cow-a-Family would help the



country achieve that goal.<sup>125</sup> “This [is] the time for poor families to own a dairy cow so that in the long run [they] can come out of poverty,” Banda declared. In what became a regular practice, Banda arranged for ceremonies to be held at which she would personally distribute livestock to beneficiaries.<sup>126</sup> Cow-a-Family had reportedly distributed 756 dairy cows to citizens across 24 districts by the end of April 2014, and Banda announced her intention for the program to benefit 1.5 million Malawians over the next five years.<sup>127</sup> Together with her government’s distribution of 8,680 goats and sheep through the parallel Small Stock Project, Banda insinuated her personal dedication to delivering basic livelihood-generating resources to the poorest citizens.<sup>128</sup>

The president used Cow-a-Family moreover to emphasise her commitment to alleviating the plight of poor women in particular. Banda tasked prominent women including Dr. Susan Chikagwa-Malunga (an agricultural scientist) and Flora Kaluwile (an NGO management consultant) with coordinating the PIPaHR. Chikagwa-Malunga, who also oversaw the Small Stock project, noted how Banda’s programmes were “targeting communities and ... vulnerable groups, particularly women who benefit through increased household incomes.”<sup>129</sup> As the 2014 election approached, it was clear that Banda had cultivated a “pro-women” brand that no other candidate could match. Noted one observer, “A-cow-for-every family [programme] is effective with female voters especially.... No one else is courting that half of the electorate.”<sup>130</sup> Indeed, Banda touted the programme as a

<sup>125</sup> “JB Says ‘one Cow per Family’ to Benefit 1m Families in Malawi,” *Malawi Nyasa Times*, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/04/05/jb-says-one-cow-per-family-to-benefit-1m-families-in-malawi/>. Shortly after Banda announced the prospective launch of Cow-a-Family, President Ian Khama of Botswana—a president noted for social protection programmes perceived by many Botswana to be the outcome of his personal initiative—declared that he would donate 150 cows to the programme. Khonanu Ontebetse, “Khama to Donate 150 Cattle to Malawi,” *Sunday Standard*, April 2, 2013, 1.

<sup>126</sup> Henry Nyaka, “Malawi: One Cow a Family Initiative Goes to Rumphi,” *Malawi News Agency (Lilongwe)*, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201307170205.html>.

<sup>127</sup> Memory Kutengule, “756 Cows Distributed to vulnerable farm families,” *Malawi Voice*, April 29, 2014, <http://joycebanda2014.org/?p=518>.

<sup>128</sup> Photo taken from “JB Says ‘one Cow per Family’ to Benefit 1m Families in Malawi.”

<sup>129</sup> “JB Launches ‘a Cow a Family’ Initiative: Pledges Houses for Malawi Flood Victims,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/02/28/jb-launches-a-cow-a-family-initiative-pledges-houses-for-malawi-flood-victims/>.

<sup>130</sup> Patrick McGroarty, “Malawi President Looks to Ride Free Cows to New Term,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 20, 2014, sec. World, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304908304579565453088446512>.



hallmark of her unparalleled dedication to poor Malawians. “I am especially talking about a cow per family initiative and Mudzi trust in which I am constructing houses for the poor: it is a known fact that anyone who will come after me will not continue these projects. So for the continuation, vote for me,” Banda beseeched voters at one 2014 election rally.<sup>131</sup>

### *Mudzi Transformation Trust*

The *Mudzi* (Village) Transformation Trust (MTT) was another hallmark programme of Banda’s “people-centred development agenda.” As a conclusion to her 2013 State of the Nation, Banda announced that she would be launching MTT in response to the sustained level of national poverty that had been documented in the 2010/11 IHS.

“Against this concern of deep levels of poverty ... I have decided that for the first time, the Government will



specifically target the individual villages across the country with comprehensive high impact interventions that will accelerate the betterment of well being of rural and urban poor,” Banda declared.<sup>132</sup> Promising to “mobilise accessible, responsive and flexible resources to support social and economic projects for the transformation of the lives of Malawians,” the president called on the private sector to finance the MTT’s several development initiatives, which in practice became concentrated on building houses for the rural and peri-urban poor. While Banda often pitched Mudzi projects as the work of government, in reality the funding for projects was sourced through party structures or the Joyce Banda Foundation.<sup>133</sup>

Marketed nonetheless as a personal initiative of her presidential office, Banda devoted considerable energy and attention to her mission of advancing poverty alleviation through MTT. “As a mother,” the president explained, “it is my sincere wish that Malawians must have decent, adequate and affordable accommodation. ... That is why I have established the Mudzi Transformation Trust to make sure that our development is inclusive with shared prosperity.”<sup>134</sup> To this end, Banda travelled to the United Nations in September 2013 with a delegation featuring “ordinary villagers and the Chairperson of the Mudzi Transformation

---

The naming inconsistency with which the programme was referenced is important and suggests the informality with which the president pursued the programme.

<sup>131</sup> “JB Vows to Continue pro-Poor Initiative: Seeks Her Own Mandate,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed May 26, 2014, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2014/05/11/jb-vows-to-continue-pro-poor-initiative-seeks-her-own-mandate/>.

<sup>132</sup> State of the Nation Address, 2013.

<sup>133</sup> “Mudzi Transformation Trust to Continue,” *Malawi24*, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://malawi24.com/2014/07/07/mudzi-transformation-trust-to-continue-pp/>.

According to an official with the Joyce Banda Foundation, the MTT “became so popular because their founder had become the first citizen and the money was not from the government.” Banda’s foundation has continued the work she had begun as president after the 2014 election.

Photo from “Malawi Leader Lay Foundation Stone for 7,500 Houses: Chinese Company to Build,” *Malawi Nyasa Times*, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/07/02/malawi-leader-lay-foundation-stone-for-7500-houses-chinese-company-to-build/>.

<sup>134</sup> “Malawi Leader Lay Foundation Stone for 7,500 Houses.”



Trust” to lobby development partner to assist her in financing the programme.<sup>135</sup> Upon her return, Banda was documented on several occasions presenting “Mudzi houses” directly to constituents.<sup>136</sup> Referencing her mission to ensure a social floor for all Malawians, Banda referred to MTT as “a dream, and the dream is now a reality, and I am happy as a leader that people can now live in a decent home.”<sup>137</sup>

By the end of 2013, MTT had delivered 500 houses and roughly US\$2.5 million in total spending toward associated projects in both rural and urban areas.<sup>138</sup> As one traditional authority in the northern Mzimba District articulated after Banda led a Mudzi ceremony in his district, “I am tongued [*sic*] tied. We have never dreamt that some of our people would have decent houses and have access to clean portable [*sic*] water. This is a dream.”<sup>139</sup> It was, this tribal authority noted moreover, because of MTT that he believed for the first time that government cared for all of its citizens. Active in more than just rural areas however, the president strove to reach poor Malawians in urban areas as well. “Some people wrongly think it is only people in rural areas; in the villages that are living in abject poverty,” the president remarked at one Mudzi ceremony. “No; it’s not only them because people in townships like in Ndirande here are worse off, too.”<sup>140</sup> It seemed that wherever she went, Banda’s implied that it was only her government that could ensure citizens’ basic needs would be met.

Despite positive regard for Banda amongst her programme’s beneficiaries, many Malawians slammed the president for her “handout” programmes. Government Platform, a consortium of domestic civil society organisations, called the “Mudzi Transformation Trust and one family one cow ... not only suspicious but also not ... worthy investing in though [they are] politically popular.”<sup>141</sup> The organisation further declared that Malawi needs “choices and decisions that transcend political considerations.” Ephraim Munthali, a prominent journalist, in an article questioned wherein MTT operated; as “a public body or a charity organisation that will operate outside the country’s systems?”<sup>142</sup> He also questioned Banda’s decision to implement a programme that in its characteristics matched the government’s longstanding Local Development Fund, the implementation arm of MASAF, and pointed out how the president had tasked traditional authorities and not bureaucrats to

---

<sup>135</sup> “Malawi President Banda Leaves for US for UN General Assembly,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/09/16/malawi-president-banda-leaves-for-us-for-un-general-assembly/>.

<sup>136</sup> “JB Hands over Mudzi House to Gogo Nyasoko of Kasungu,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/12/03/jb-hands-over-mudzi-house-to-gogo-nyasoko-of-kasungu/>.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Memory Kutengule, “Malawi: Almost K1 Billion Spent on Mudzi Transformation Trust Project,” *Malawi News Agency*, November 25, 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201311260092.html>.

<sup>139</sup> “Mzimba Chiefs Happy with Mudzi Trust,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/09/22/mzimba-chiefs-happy-with-mudzi-trust/>.

<sup>140</sup> “JB Storms Ndirande, Assures Better Life for Malawi Citizens,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/12/09/jb-storms-ndirande-assures-better-life-for-malawi-citizens/>.

<sup>141</sup> “CSOs Thrash JB on Mudzi Transformation Trust, One Family One Cow: We Need Decisions That Transcend Political Considerations,” accessed March 18, 2015, <http://malawivoice.com/2013/06/20/csos-thrash-jb-on-mudzi-transformationtrust-one-family-one-cow-we-need-decisions-that-transcend-political-considerations-81875/>.

<sup>142</sup> “‘Cut the Chaff’: JB’s Mudzi Trust Will Either Duplicate LDF or Kill It off,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed June 11, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/06/01/cut-the-chaff-jbs-mudzi-trust-will-either-duplicate-ldf-or-kill-it-off/>.

select programme beneficiaries.<sup>143</sup> Academic observer Ernest Thindwa articulated a common observation that Banda's ceremonies were more about cultivating her brand than truly about poverty alleviation. "This [the size of Banda's entourage] gives an impression that the government has a lot of money," Thindwa noted.<sup>144</sup> "In my view the president is just trying to popularise herself [through the entourages and the branding of the items]." Indeed, in some cases bags of maize were stamped "Joyce Banda."<sup>145</sup> Banda's tactics also made waves in parliament where the DPP's Chaponda commented on the floor that "the President's cost of travel alone ... to distribute one cow per household costs the taxpayer K12 million [US\$30,000], per day. This excludes the cost of the cow."<sup>146</sup>



Instead of disavowing these characterisations however, Banda embraced the notion that she was the only leader willing to ensure that Malawians' basic needs were being met. Vowing to continue her pro-poor initiatives, Banda claimed that "even in Western countries there are ultra-poor people who survive on handouts" and promised that if elected she would "continue to give help to those in need."<sup>147</sup> Nor did she disavow any criticisms that it was she and the

PP rather than the government that was pursuing poverty alleviation. "I want all of you to know," she proclaimed at a November 2012 food distribution event, "that I will continue distributing maize to the needy people of this country. There is no way I can stand by and drink tea when people are suffering, so I will not tire, myself and various members of the People's Party will continue to distribute maize where it is needed most."<sup>148</sup> Images of Banda personally delivering bags of maize, dancing with rural women, and sitting with elderly villagers—reifying her effusive rhetoric around poverty reduction—percolated through the media in the weeks leading up to the election.<sup>149</sup> Everywhere Banda went around the country, the PP's open lock and key logo was present. This symbol, which adorned PIPaHR maize bags and Mudzi houses, reinforced the president's mission, as she articulated in her 2013

<sup>143</sup> Banda's decision to task traditional authorities ("chiefs") with beneficiary targeting and not bureaucrats suggests further, as Said and Singini (2014) argued, how the president did not have the support of the bureaucracy in implementing programmes. Gabay (2014) argued furthermore that working through traditional authorities allowed Banda to build grassroots support for the PP by cultivating a patronage network. Clive Gabay, "Two 'transitions': The Political Economy of Joyce Banda's Rise to Power and the Related Role of Civil Society Organisations in Malawi," *Review of African Political Economy* 41, no. 141 (July 3, 2014): 374–88, doi:10.1080/03056244.2014.901949.

<sup>144</sup> Face of Malawi, "Queries over Joyce Banda Maize," *Face of Malawi*, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.faceofmalawi.com/2012/11/queries-over-joyce-banda-maize/>.

Bracketed items are original to the document.

<sup>145</sup> "A Long Way to Go," *The Economist*, March 19, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/baobab/2013/03/malawi>. For more on the significance of "Banda maize" in the 2014 election, see Gabay, "Two 'transitions.'"

<sup>146</sup> Chaponda, Response to the State of the Nation Address, Parliamentary Hansards, 20 May 2013. "JB Takes Food Distribution Exercise to Mangochi," *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed May 26, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/11/09/jb-takes-food-distribution-exercise-to-mangochi/>.

<sup>147</sup> "JB Vows to Continue pro-Poor Initiative."

<sup>148</sup> "JB Takes Food Distribution Exercise to Mangochi."

<sup>149</sup> *Madam President*.

State of the Nation, to “unlock the potential of the Malawian people to regain their freedom, dignity and sense of pride.”<sup>150</sup>

With ambitions for a full term but just twenty-five months in office before the 2014 election, Banda toured the country, touting her record on poverty alleviation. At several “development rallies” where she would distribute “maize, livestock, houses for the poor and elderly and even motorbikes to the youth” (Dulani and Dionne, 2014), Banda furthered the notion that she would be the champion of poor Malawians.<sup>151</sup>



I have built houses for the needy ... [and] we have distributed several cows to the poor. We have done such projects and several others for the benefit of Malawians. ... I will continue to build houses for the poor. I will continue to distribute cows for families and in particular to help the poor people of this country.... My fellow Malawians you know what I have done for this country. I have come to ask for your vote. If you want the programmes we have been doing for the people of Malawi like the ones I have mentioned to continue, vote for me.<sup>152</sup>

Though her tactics may have elicited contentious public views of her leadership style, Banda’s spearheading of several initiatives through her presidential office—to which she could claim personal credit—furthered the associations between the president and her pro-poor programmes. “The president loves handouts,” noted one observer. “She says she’s a charitable president and would like to give to people to alleviate their poverty. ... She’s been distributing cows, goats, shoes ...”<sup>153</sup> This public commitment to charity was what Banda hoped would carry her to victory in 2014.



## Election 2014

As had been the case during the early part of Mutharika’s term, Banda pursued poverty alleviation through programmes that she hoped would earn her the support of a national electorate. However, she faced considerable governance challenges. Though Banda managed by February 2013 to recruit 77 MPs (40% of members) to the PP’s caucus in parliament, the president lacked an established grassroots network and a reliable bureaucracy that could implement a wide-scale poverty alleviation programme.<sup>154</sup> Her response to these

<sup>150</sup> State of the Nation Address, 2013

<sup>151</sup> Boniface Dulani and Kim Yi Dionne, “Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections in Malawi, May 2014,” *Electoral Studies* 36 (December 2014): 219, doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2014.08.005.

<sup>152</sup> “JB Increasingly Upbeat to Win Malawi Elections,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2014/05/11/jb-increasingly-upbeat-to-win-malawi-elections/>.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Henry Chingaie, Director, Institute for Policy Research & Social Empowerment

<sup>154</sup> Many in the PP camp defected (back) to other parties during the “Cashgate” scandal that emerged in September of 2013. For more information about the practice of party-switching in Malawi, see Daniel J. Young,

conditions was to pursue various “handout” programmes through which she could personally demonstrate her commitment to poverty reduction. The fact also that Banda had acceded to the donor agenda, whereas Mutharika had emphatically rejected it, contrasted her brand from that of her controversial predecessor.

For their parts, the major opposition parties were all outspoken in opposition to these handout programmes and insisted that economic growth was the only way to achieve poverty alleviation.<sup>155</sup> The president’s fiercest critic was probably the MCP’s Lazarus Chakwera, a reverend in the Assemblies of God church and a newcomer to national politics. In his letter opening the MCP election manifesto (“Nothing for Us, Without Us”), Chakwera harangued “**personalized politics**” and “a dependency syndrome which unfortunately is being exploited by the leaders to gain political popularity through handouts.”<sup>156</sup> In one stump speech, Chakwera characterised Banda’s programmes as actually increasing poverty, though they were ostensibly dedicated to reducing it. “Malawians are poor not just because of God’s will but ... due to the spirit of hand-outs which has grown roots among Malawians,” Chakwera declared.<sup>157</sup> “No country in the world can develop through the spirit of giving its citizens Cows, Houses and any other Materials, but [rather by] teaching people to work hard.”<sup>158</sup> Though the MCP manifesto lacked mention of a specific poverty reduction strategy beyond increasing macroeconomic growth, Chakwera in one speech called for “programmes beneficial to Malawians and not mere distribution of cattle,” an implicit criticism of the Cow-a-Family programme.<sup>159</sup> On Election Day, Chakwera beseeched prospective voters to “vote for me ... not because I am giving you handouts in this campaign but because you desire to see change of things in a Malawi to come.”<sup>160</sup>




---

“An Initial Look into Party Switching in Africa: Evidence from Malawi,” *Party Politics* 20, no. 1 (2014): 105–15.

<sup>155</sup> According to Chunga (2014), the structure of the MCP manifestos has remained unchanged through the years from 1999 to 2009, and neither does the 2014 manifesto does not deviate much from this mould. One theme that transcends all of the manifestos is the party’s desire to demonstrate its qualification to lead on the basis of having been “the Party which liberated every Malawian from the colonial bondage and brought Independence and human dignity to Malawi.” Chunga, “Examining the Relevance of Political Parties in Malawi,” 12; MCP Election Manifesto, 2014.

<sup>156</sup> MCP Election Manifesto, 2014. Emphasis is original.

<sup>157</sup> “Southern Region Shuns MCP Once More, As Chakwera Scorns JB’s One Cow Per Family Initiative,” *Malawi Voice*, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://malawivoice.com/2014/05/08/southern-region-shuns-mcp-chakwera-scorns-jbs-one-cow-per-family-initiative/>.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> “Chakwera Attacks JB on Hand-Outs in Zomba,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2014/05/08/chakwera-attacks-jb-on-hand-outs-in-zomba/>.

<sup>160</sup> “Chakwera Bemoans Handouts,” *Afriem.org*, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.afriem.org/2014/05/chakwera-bemoans-handouts-2/>.



Peter Mutharika's campaign theme, in the words of his brother's former legal counsel Z. Allan Ntata, was to "continue from where my brother left off."<sup>161</sup> DPP party leaders clearly sought to continue the party's Bingu-era food production branding, adding to their party regalia portraits of Bingu alongside the maize cob motif. To this end moreover, the DPP offered to double down on the successes of FISP, proposing to "make subsidized fertilizer **available for every maize subsistence farmer** that [sic] needs it."<sup>162</sup> Subsidies were still needed, the newcomer Mutharika explained, "so that every Malawian can afford the means to produce food while earning the dignity of labouring to feed [themselves]."<sup>163</sup> Resonant with Minister Gondwe's 2007-2008 Budget Address, the DPP in its manifesto enunciated further its collective vision to transform Malawi "**from being a predominantly importing and consuming country to a predominantly producing and exporting country; and a food-sufficient country** where hunger is eliminated."<sup>164</sup> Not only would the nation's farmers experience food security with the DPP in government, the party's branding suggested, but Malawians would be able to achieve that food security by their own efforts. Gondwe also distinguished between what he believed the DPP and PP, respectively, would offer the country. "We [the DPP] will subsidize the price of ... cement and empower Malawians to build what they want by themselves," he noted, "not *apa mbofyo, apa mbofyo!* (Here a small unplanned house, there another house)."<sup>165</sup> The manifesto also included a promise that a DPP government would pass a Law on Handouts in order to "phase out the spirit of dependency."

As the election approached, Banda attempted to keep the public's attention on her ambitions to reduce poverty. The PP manifesto ("Transforming Malawi Together") in its first chapter trumpets the president's successes in "modernizing rural areas and fighting poverty" through MTT. "In the short time I have been President," Banda penned in a letter opening the manifesto, "we have taken decisive action to recover the economy, build a foundation for growth and deal with corruption.... I am committed to continue to champion the cause of the rural and urban poor."

Yet new crises emerged during the final quarter of Banda's term that distracted the general public from the poverty-oriented brand she had striven to project. Most notably, in September 2013 it was revealed that a number of civil servants had stolen about US\$30 million from government coffers. In response, donors withheld about US\$150 million in budgetary support from the government.<sup>166</sup> "Cashgate," as the scandal came to be known, included the mysterious shooting of a senior budget official and the arrest of more than 60 government officials including senior ministers in the Banda government. Though never legally implicated in a scandal that likely predated her presidency, Banda received harsh criticism in the media for her handling of Cashgate.<sup>167</sup> In addition to Cashgate, the return of drought in the last quarter of 2013 left 1.46 million people (9.5% of the population) unable to

---

<sup>161</sup> "The Spirit of Bingu and a Leadership without an Agenda: Z Allan Ntata," *The Maravi Post*, accessed June 22, 2015, <http://www.maravipost.com/national/opinions/general-scope/8810-the-spirit-of-bingu-and-a-leadership-without-an-agenda-z-allan-ntata.html>.

<sup>162</sup> DPP Election Manifesto, 2014. Emphasis is original.

<sup>163</sup> "Mutharika Wants Feedback on Proposals to Tackle Malawi 'intellectual Crisis,'" *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/04/19/mutharika-wants-feedback-on-proposals-to-tackle-malawi-intellectual-crisis/>.

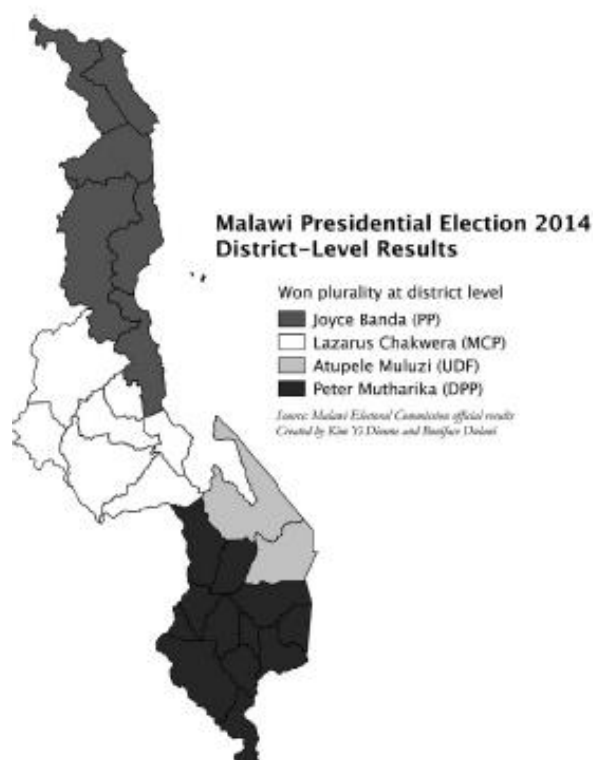
<sup>164</sup> Emphasis is original.

<sup>165</sup> "Goodall Mocks JB's Mudzi Transformation Trust," *The Malawi Oracle Times*, accessed June 11, 2015, <http://www.orakonews.com/goodall-mocks-jbs-mudzi-transformation-trust/>.

<sup>166</sup> Ware, *Development in Difficult Sociopolitical Contexts*, 128.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

meet their annual food requirements and caused the price of maize to climb from US\$0.37 to US\$0.60 per kg in January 2014.<sup>168</sup> Both of these issues presented major public relations stumbling blocks for a president who sought to portray herself as being sympathetic to the plight of the poor.



With scandals swirling and the economy stuttering, Banda won 20 percent of the vote, failing to win the election and the pan-regional mandate she had no doubt endeavoured to earn. Peter Mutharika won the election with just 36.4 percent of the vote, winning majorities in only Southern districts in which fellow Lomwes predominate. In this way, the outcome mirrored Malawi's election results prior to 2009. However, a deeper investigation of the election outcome reveals a twist. Without winning a majority of any Northern or Central district, Mutharika nonetheless placed second in both of those regions, suggesting how residual support for Bingu and/or the party's food production branding may have buoyed support for the DPP in those regions.<sup>169</sup> In other ways too the 2014 outcome reflected the multifaceted concerns of the Malawian electorate. Chakwera won only (and all)

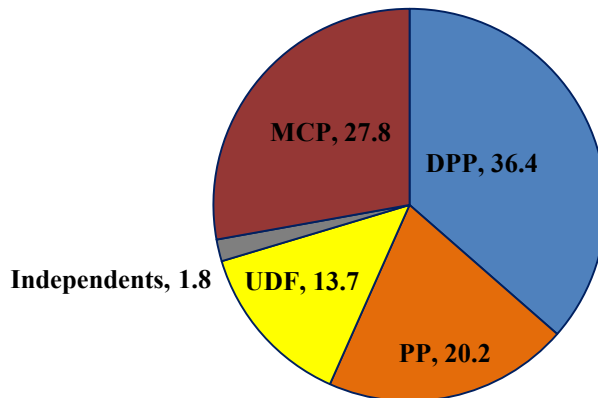
Central districts, thanks to the support of fellow Chewas, while Atupele Muluzi, son of the former president, earned pluralities in south-eastern districts where fellow Yao Muslims predominate. Banda, though she comes from the Central region, won pluralities in every Northern district. Though her husband's ethnic Tonga and northerner identity may have augmented her support there, the fact that the Northern region lacked strong partisan ties after the collapse of AFORD in 2009 suggests alternatively how a plurality of voters chose Banda on the basis of her performance as president.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>168</sup> The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee, "National Food Security Forecast: April 2013 to March 2014," 2013, <http://www.wfp.org/content/malawi-national-food-security-forecast-april-2013-march-2014>.

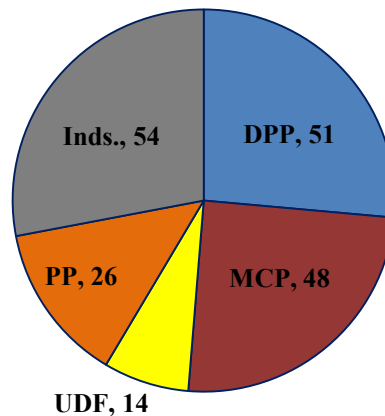
<sup>169</sup> Michael Wahman Nandini Patel, "The Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Elections in Malawi, May 2014," *Afrika Spectrum: Deutsche Zeitschrift Für Gegenwartsbezogene Afrikaforschung* 50, no. 1 (2015): 88.

<sup>170</sup> The hypothesis that Richard Banda's identity was salient in the 2014 election was offered by Dulani and Dionne, "Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections in Malawi, May 2014," 222. The hypothesis that President Banda earned the support of northern voters on account of her grassroots campaign tactics was offered by Cammack, "Malawi in Crisis, 2011–12," 382. AFORD had been the dominant party in the North, but after its collapse after the 2009 election, no party had earned widespread support there.

### Presidential election results, 2014



### National Assembly election results, 2014



While the data presented in this branding analysis cannot explain the motivations of the marginal voter in 2014, it seems likely that salient issues as well as ethno-regional ties are both, to variable degrees, potential determinants of election outcomes. This was also the conclusion of Brazys *et al.* (2015) who commented on how “ethnicity is a fluid ascription [that] can fluctuate as other factors become more or less salient.”<sup>171</sup> Going forward therefore, the political window of opportunity for new pro-poor champions to win a pan-regional mandate remains open.

### Discussion

Regardless of whether candidates are in fact able to earn a national support base in a particular election however, it is clear that Malawi’s recent presidential incumbents have operated under the belief that they can achieve national consensus around their respective political brands. As Banda noted—perhaps mistakenly—in a 2014 interview, “I thank God—

---

<sup>171</sup> Samuel Brazys, Peter Heaney, and Patrick P. Walsh, “From the Great Lakes to the Great Rift Valley: Does Strategic Economic Policy Explain the 2009 Malawi Election?,” Working Paper (University College Dublin. Geary Institute, February 28, 2014), 51, <http://researchrepository.ucd.ie/handle/10197/5612>.

in some places, elections go on tribal lines. In Malawi we have gone beyond that.”<sup>172</sup> Indeed, for Banda and Mutharika, neither of whom had established patronage networks initially, governing in a fashion that could earn them national appeal was a political necessity. To this end, both candidates branded themselves in ways that they hoped would resonate with a broader base of voters—food production in Mutharika’s case and basic social protection coverage for more marginalised groups in Banda’s case. This analysis ultimately supports the findings of van Donge (1995) who argued that candidates in Malawi have, despite the undercurrent of patronage politics, attempted “to portray themselves as [being] of much wider significance.”

Furthermore, candidate and party branding can be understood not as a series of discrete events, but rather as a continuum of branding and counter-branding exercises in response to perceived gaps in the electoral space. Muluzi and Mutharika both cultivated brands suggesting how they would emphasise food security, yet it was the latter’s decision to defy the demands of Malawi’s development partners in implementing AISP that set the Mutharika/DPP brand apart. The brand thereafter became not just about ensuring food security but about empowering farmers to the point at which they could graduate from smallholder status and the country from dependency. To this end, Mutharika demanded donor disengagement from Malawi’s economic affairs, though it was this aspect of his brand that ultimately put the country on a path to financial ruin and deepening poverty. Joyce Banda, even before taking office, branded herself as a president who would take the country in the opposite direction. Mutharika spurned the donors; Banda embraced them. Mutharika championed able-bodied workers; Banda championed women and other marginalised Malawians for whom export-driven growth had not been inclusive. In the 2014 election, the challengers Chakwera and Peter Mutharika reacted to Banda’s “maternal” brand by advocating labour-based empowerment as a means to achieving poverty alleviation.

Though this analysis elucidates how Malawian political elites engage in political branding, it does little to clarify the relative favourability of different poverty brands to voters. Secondary literature on attitudes toward poverty reduction instruments in Malawi and across the region offer some important insights, however. There is an enduring belief throughout much of the developing world, Ward (1999) argued, that poor people are poor simply because they are unwilling to work.<sup>173</sup> For many citizens therefore, poverty eradication programmes that promote personal initiative are preferred to programmes that deliver benefits directly.<sup>174</sup> The analysis of Kalebe-Nyamongo and Marquette (2014) supported this observation. Among Malawian political elites, “there is preference for productive forms of social protection, such as input subsidies or public works that support the ‘active’ poor, and policy strategies that enable the poor to become economically active.”<sup>175</sup> In agrarian Malawi, non-elite attitudes toward poverty and work suggest too that farm subsidies are an ideal mechanism for poverty alleviation. Dorward *et al.* (2009) noted how a pilot programme that delivered an input package to smallholder farmers was received with a high level of

---

<sup>172</sup> Joyce Banda, Talk Africa: Live interview with Dr. Joyce Banda.

<sup>173</sup> This idea, Ward argues, arose principally from the 1834 English Poor Law Act that shaped welfare policy across the historical Commonwealth, including Malawi.

<sup>174</sup> Michael Ward, “Perceptions of Poverty: The Historical Legacy\*,” *IDS Bulletin* 30, no. 2 (1999): 23.

<sup>175</sup> Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo and Heather Marquette, “Elite Attitudes Towards Cash Transfers and the Poor in Malawi,” 2014, 18, <http://publications.dlprog.org/EliteAttitudesCTs.pdf>.



satisfaction among 86 percent of participants and “was more popular ... than food or cash for work.”<sup>176</sup>

These commonplace attitudes toward the poor and anti-poverty instruments suggest that politicians who brand themselves as being supportive of farm subsidies stand a greater chance of appealing to the electorate. This suggests further that Banda was misguided in her belief that a focus on direct transfers (“handouts”) would endear her to poor voters. Indeed, the fact that Malawians seem to favour labour-based solutions to poverty rather than transfer-based solutions implies that a Chakwera-MCP or Mutharika-DPP brand would be received more favourably than the Banda-PP brand. Yet relative favourability of poverty brands does not add insight about whether these brands were even at all salient to voters in 2009 and 2014. Absent public opinion data on the salience of election issues in Malawi, data from the Afrobarometer-Malawi survey could provide some insights into the relative salience of candidates’ poverty-centred political brands during these two elections.



---

<sup>176</sup> Andrew Dorward, Bruce Guenther, and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, “Agriculture and Social Protection in Malawi,” 2009, 9–10, <http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/2358>.

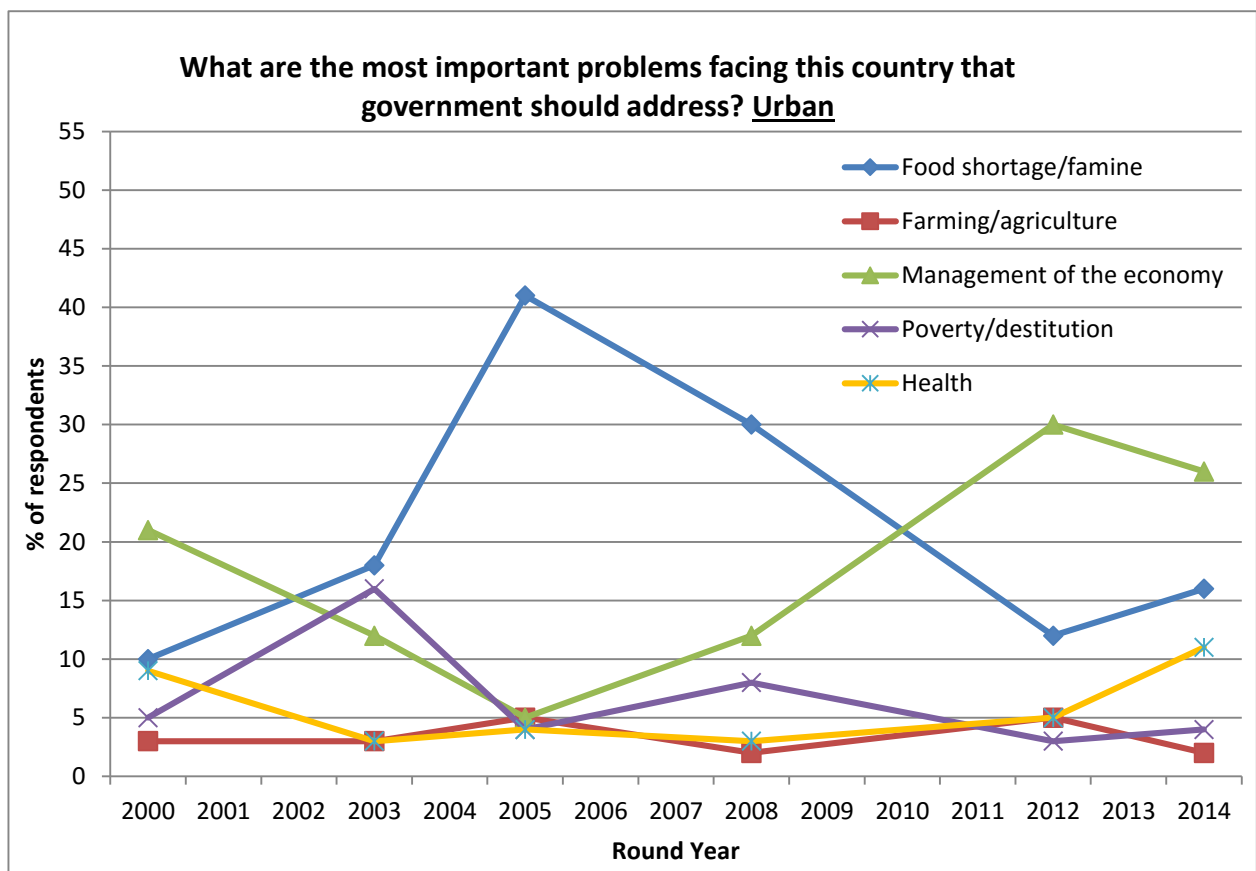
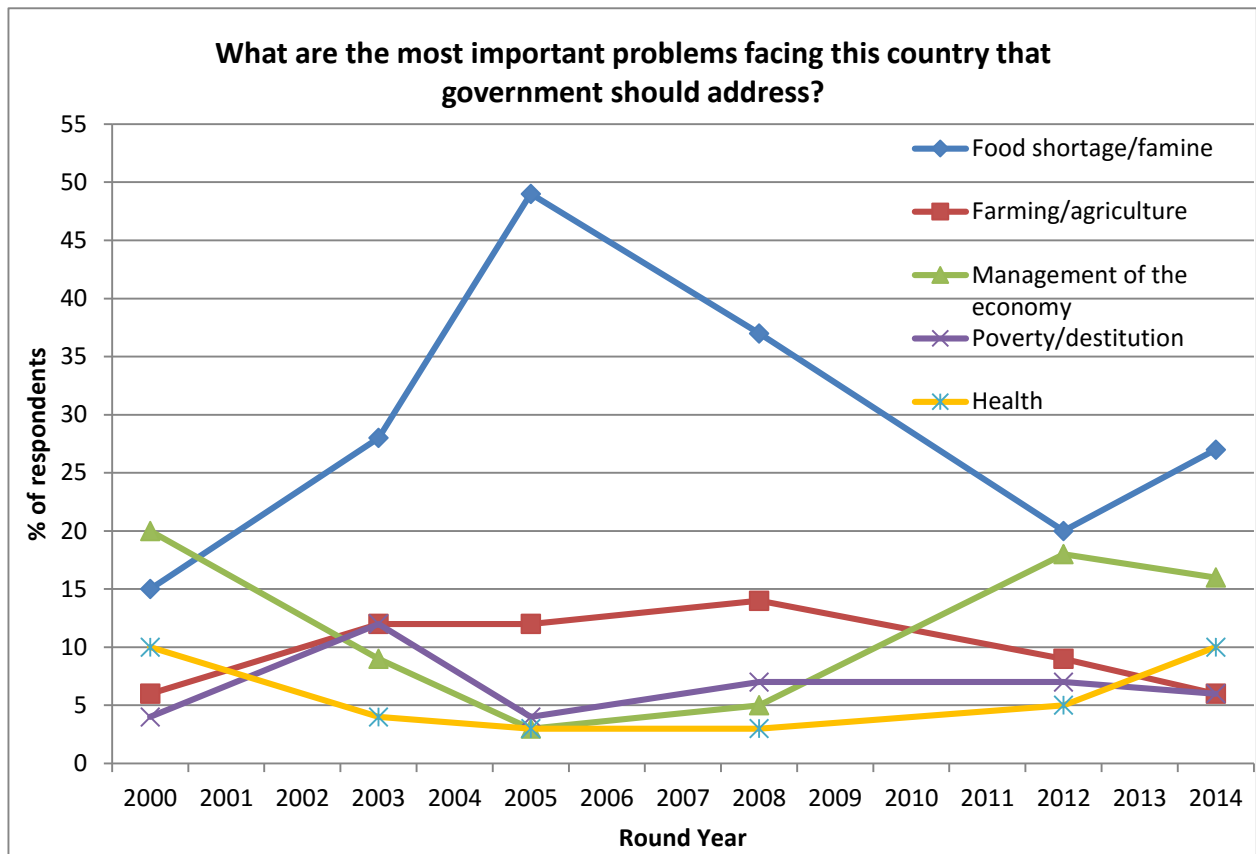
## Data Analysis

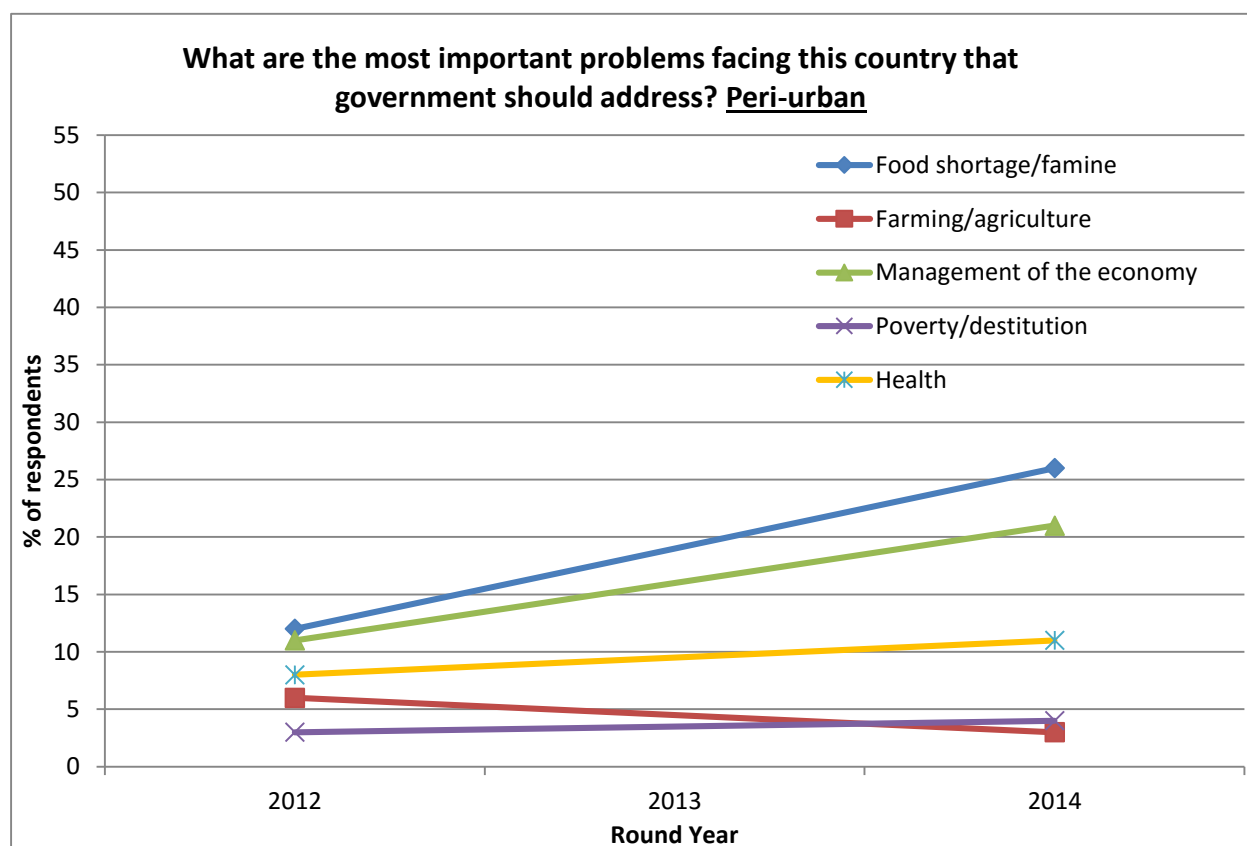
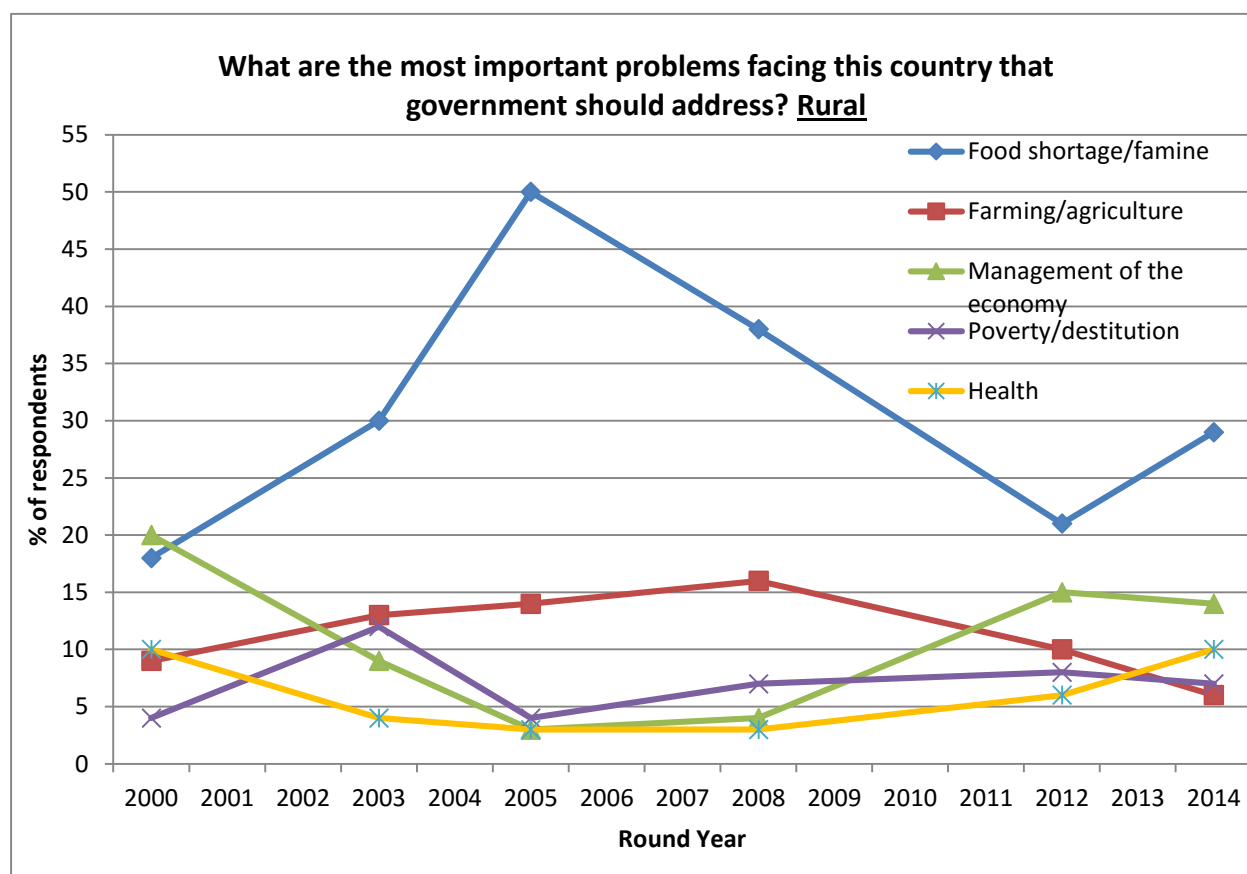
As the prior section has evidenced, Malawian presidential candidates have responded to the heightened political competition through the development of political messaging centred on poverty eradication. To understand the possible effects that such branding exercise have in changing voting behaviour however, it first becomes necessary to know what salience particular societal issues have amongst voters. In this regard, public opinion data from the Afrobarometer-Malawi (AB) survey can offer some insights into what issues were salient to voters ahead of a given election.

The hypothesis is that if a particular issue (e.g., food security) is salient to voters, then a candidate's public commitment to resolving that issue (i.e., his/her brand) will be influential—relative to branding around other issues—in shaping voting behaviour. By contrast, if a particular election issue is not salient to voters, then branding around that issue will not be influential in shaping voting behaviour. In Malawi, the issues to which survey respondents have expressed concern are numerous, but they tend to centre on management of the economy, food security, corruption, and public health. Depending on the relative importance of these issues to voters, particular issue brands may or may not resonate with voters' concerns. If the issues around which candidates cultivate brands are not the crux of voters' concerns in fact, but rather are secondary to other factors such as candidate ethno-regional identity, then branding will be less influential than these factors in determining the election outcome.

### **What issues do Malawians care about? The Bingu wa Mutharika era**

For a plurality of Malawians, “Food shortage/famine” has consistently been the most important societal challenge that government should address (see below). This is not surprising given how Malawi is an overwhelmingly agrarian society in which many millions of subsistence farmers survive under conditions of heightened vulnerability. Concerns about food insecurity have always been relatively high during the period, according to the data, but the significant variation over time can likely be attributed to the efforts of government to assuage food-related crises. In 2000, when the first AB survey was recorded, the UDF government of President Bakili Muluzi had implemented the Starter Pack Scheme (SPS). The SPS considerably increased the availability of food in Malawi and can be identified as the reason for why only 15 percent of respondents (18 percent of rural respondents) believed that “Food shortage/famine” was the most important issue that government should address. However, the IMF and USAID successfully lobbied government to scale-down SPS in favour of the more narrowly-targeted Targeted Input Programme (TIP), which has been attributed to exacerbation of the effects of the drought that hit the country in 2001-2002. As a likely consequence, the percentage of Malawians in 2003 identifying food shortages as the most important problem that government should address nearly doubled to 28 percent of respondents.

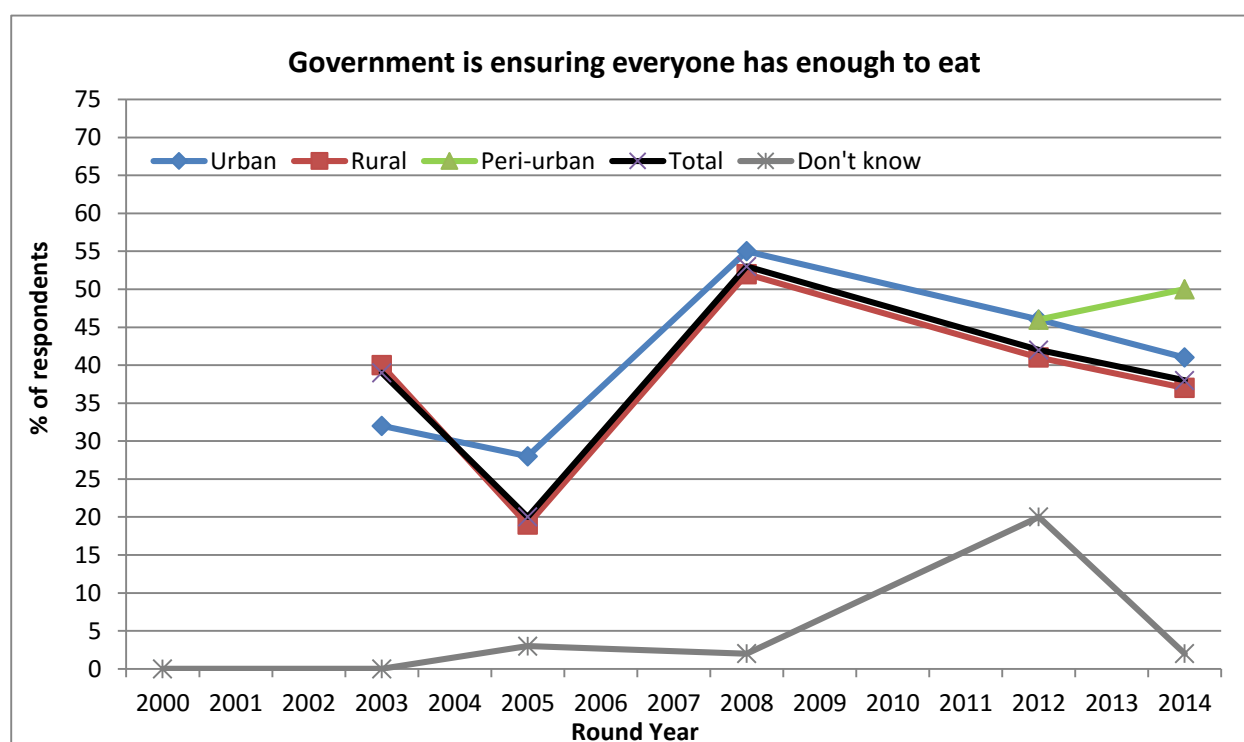


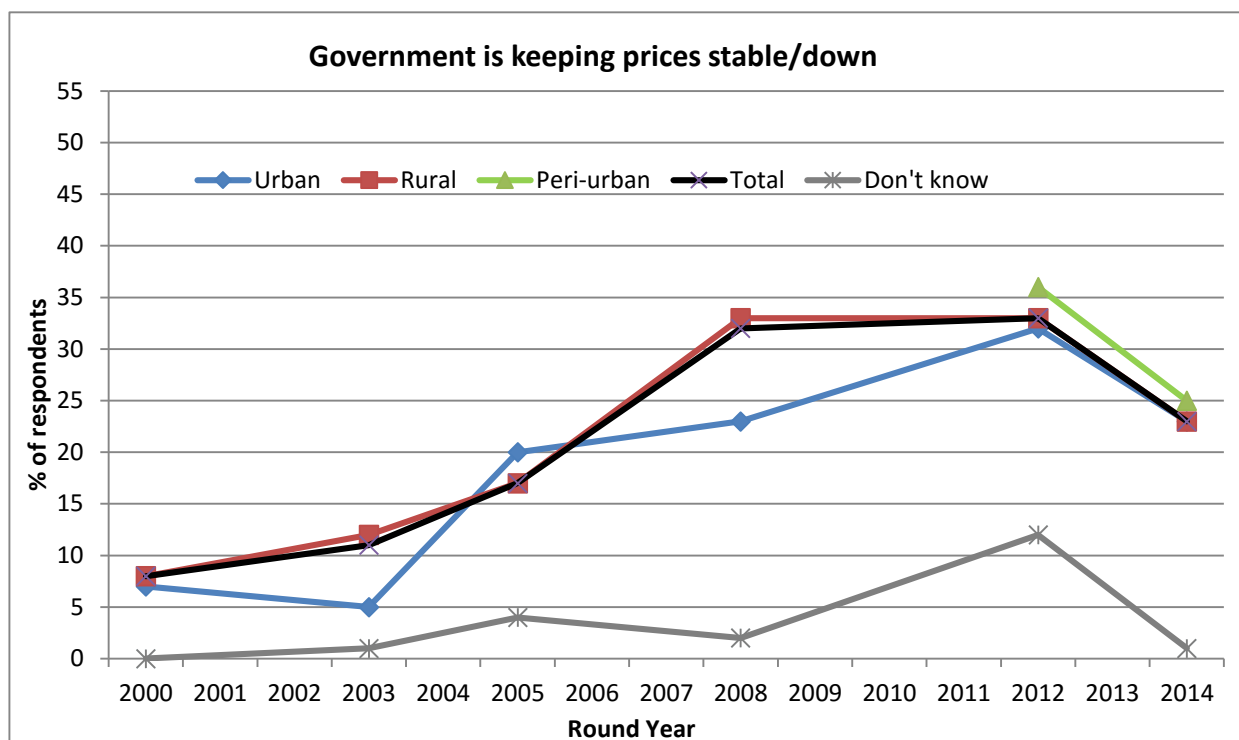


During the first Mutharika term (2004-2009), the correlation strengthened between government's action to combat potential famine and the decline in respondent concerns about

food shortage. In 2005, a year when only 37 percent of Malawians were able to meet their food requirements due to severe drought, nearly half of respondents noted how food shortage was the concern that government should prioritise. In addition, “Farming/agriculture” was chosen by the next largest grouping (12%). No other option was chosen by more than 4 percent of respondents. By the year of the next AB survey (2008), government fertiliser subsidies disseminated through AISP had catalysed substantial increases to maize production in the country, with the quantity nearly tripling over the course of two growing seasons. Though concerns about food remained high, the fact that food availability had increased markedly was without doubt the principal cause for the decline in food shortage concerns among rural respondents, from 50 percent in 2005 to 21 percent by 2012.

The Mutharika government’s efforts to address food insecurity through agricultural productivity translated to considerable improvements in public favourability toward the government and president, according to the data. Drought in the early to mid-2000s had resulted in relatively severe food shortages. Though a spike in food aid from the World Food Programme to Malawi had undoubtedly assuaged some hunger, only 20 percent of AB respondents in 2005 said that the government was ensuring everyone had enough food to eat. After fertiliser subsidies had massively increased crop yields, the percentage who said government was in fact ensuring people had enough to eat rose to 53 percent. Critically, this was the only recorded moment in the period when a majority of respondents said government was succeeding in ensuring food security.



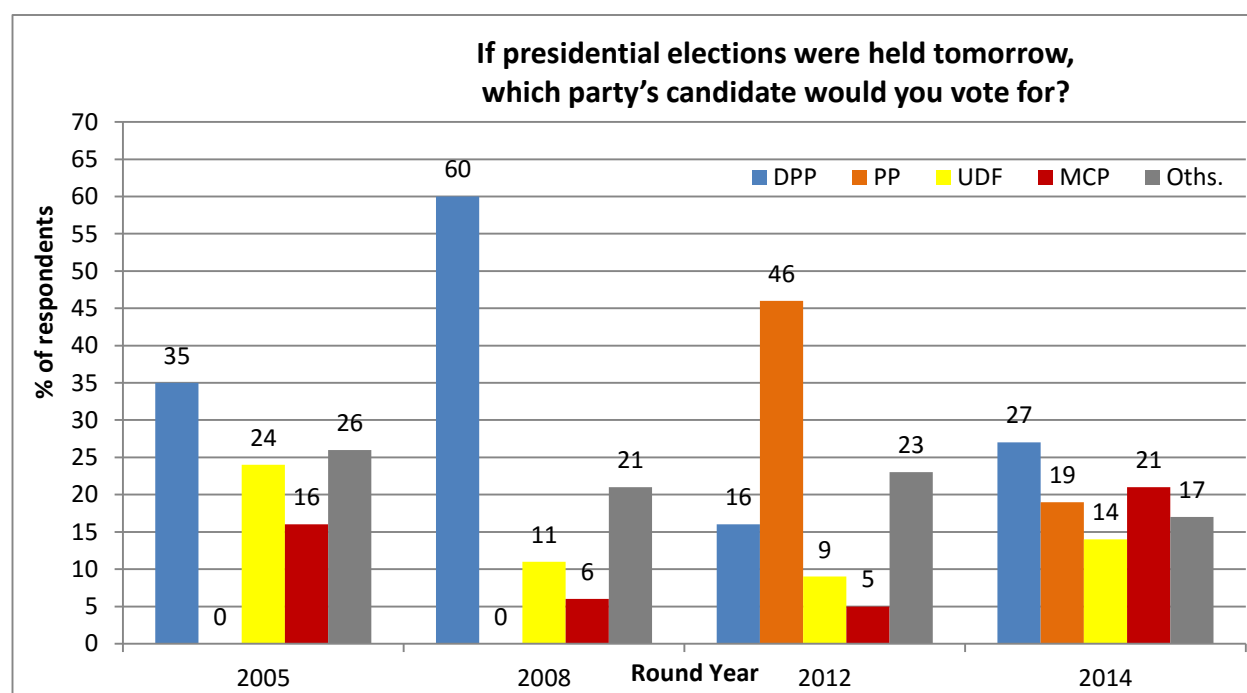
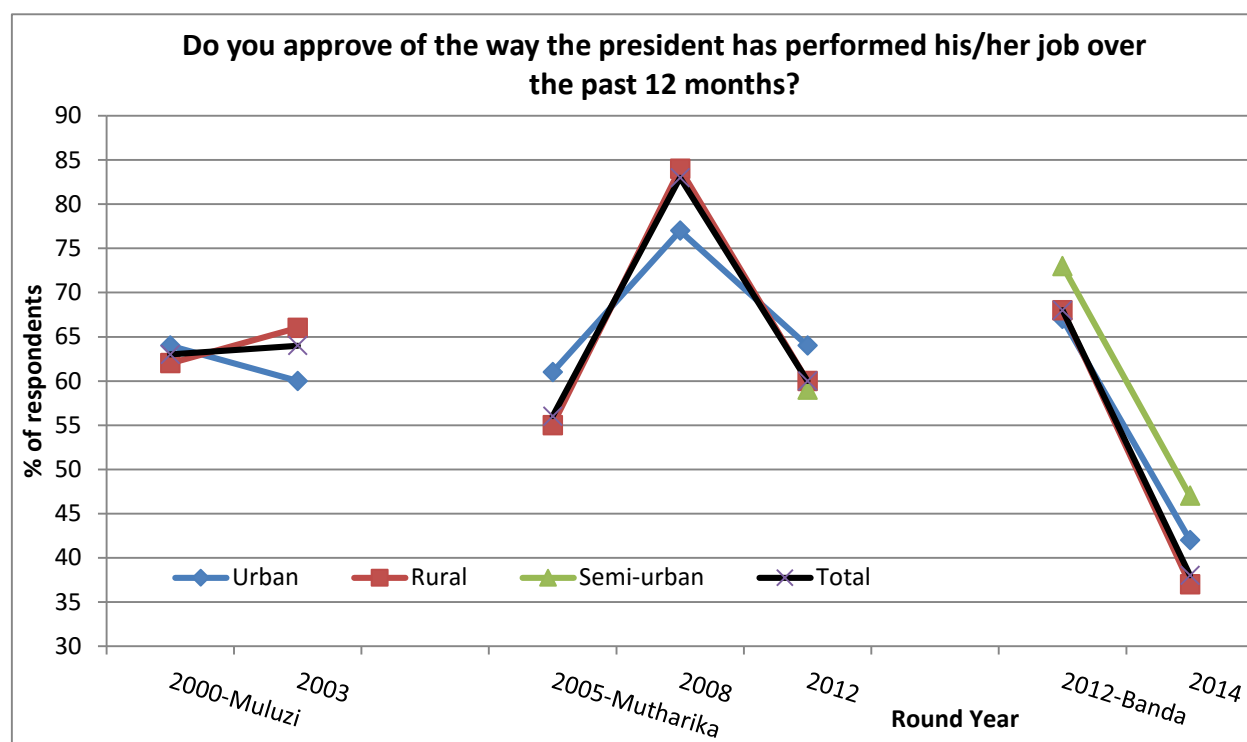


On price stability, which was also an important concern of poor rural Malawians who rely on purchased maize for part of the year, Mutharika's government improved its standing with respondents. During the early decade, national crop shortages caused principally by reductions to state-delivered fertiliser subsidies through SPS had resulted in high maize prices. Accordingly, only 12 and 17 percent of respondents in 2003 and 2005, respectively, indicated that government was doing a satisfactory job keeping prices stable or holding them down. That percentage virtually doubled to 33 percent in 2008, a rate that was sustained in 2012. Though respondents were still on the whole disapproving of government's price control efforts, they were more approving in 2008 and in 2012 than at any other recorded interval during the 14-year period.

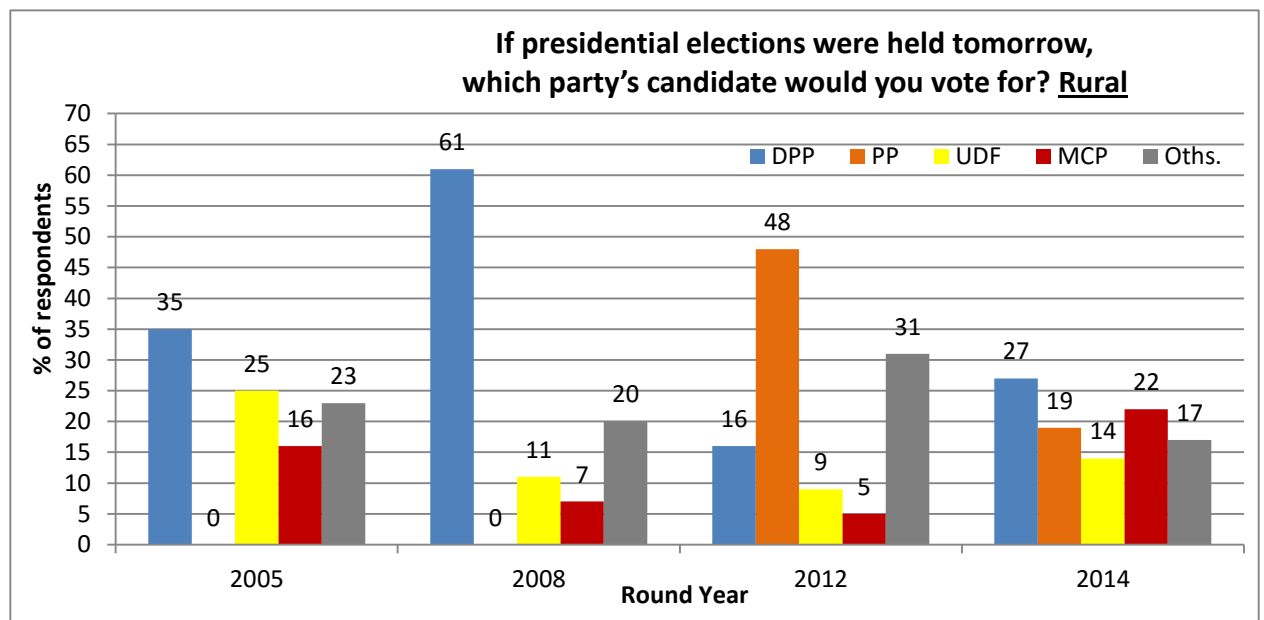
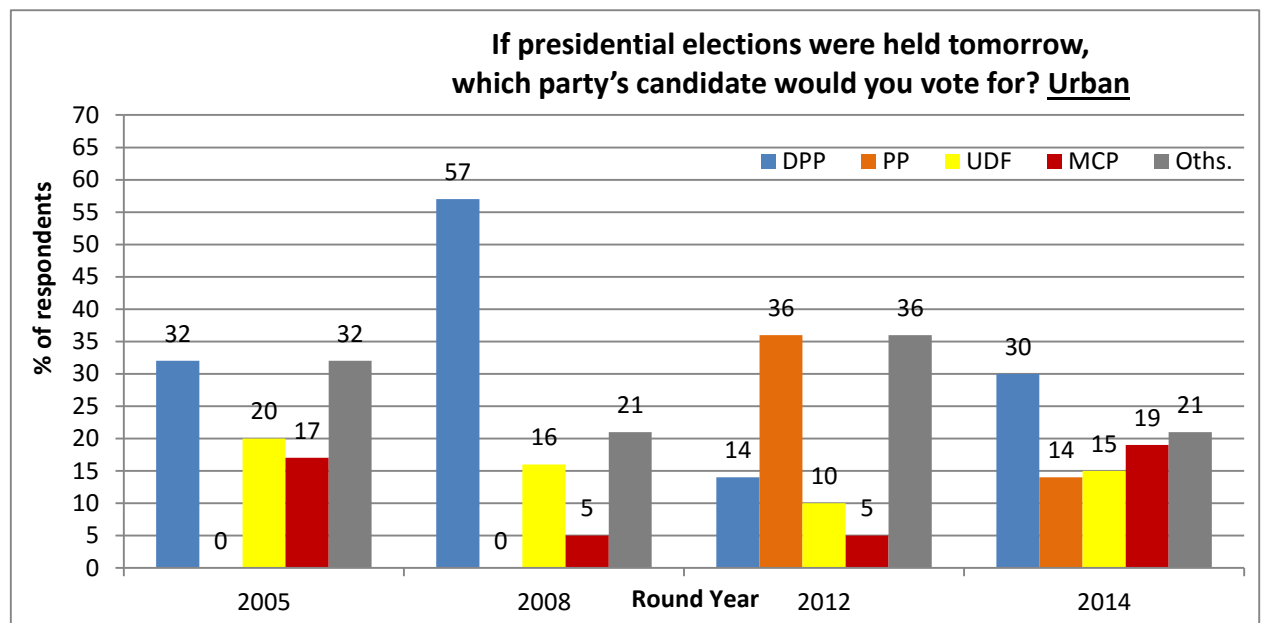
### **Presidential approval and the 2009 election**

The emphasis that Mutharika placed on food production especially after 2005 was very likely to have been a factor in boosting his presidential approval rating. One year into the president's first term, a middling 56 percent of AB respondents believed that Mutharika had performed his job well over the prior twelve months. By 2008, the president's approval rating among AB respondents had climbed to 83 percent. Given the large percentage of Malawians who in 2005 had identified "Food shortage/famine" as the most important issue that government should address, Mutharika's decision to brand his DPP as being principally concerned with food production set him up for considerable popular approbation. Having addressed in a profound way an issue that a large proportion of Malawians consider to be of paramount importance ("Food shortage/famine"), Mutharika's political stock rose dramatically. When respondents were asked in 2008 which party they would vote for in an election, 60 percent said they would vote for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). In the

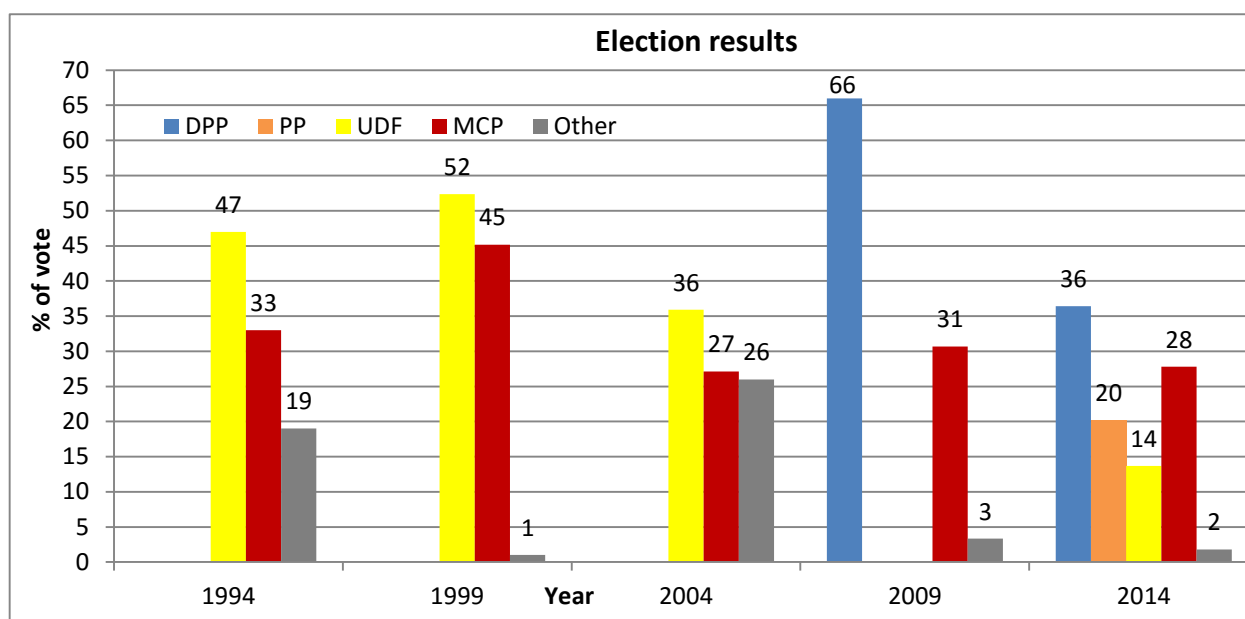
following year's presidential election, Mutharika got the support of 66 percent of voters (see below).<sup>177</sup>



<sup>177</sup> In the 2008 AB survey, 14 percent of respondents refused to divulge which party they would vote for; 3 percent said they did not know; 3 percent said they would not vote. These values partially explain discrepancies between how respondents said they would vote and how 2009 voters in fact voted.







Following the 2009 election, Mutharika experienced a significant decline in public approval rating from 83 percent to 60 percent among AB respondents. With the government having addressed during the late 2000s to a considerable degree the country's food insecurity concerns, Malawians' concerns had shifted considerably by the beginning of the 2010s. Proper management of the economy had become by 2012 a topmost concern for nearly as many people (18%) as those who indicated that food shortage was their top concern (20%). There were, indeed, reasons for Malawians to be concerned with the state of the economy. Mutharika's inability to bring foreign exchange into the country drastically reduced critical imports including fuel and medicine, causing the national economy essentially to grind to a halt. As a likely consequence, economic management had become the most important problem for government to address for urban Malawians especially.

### **The institutionalisation of subsidies**

By the time Joyce Banda became president in April 2012, a "Green Revolution" had eliminated the food security concerns that Malawians had experienced in the mid-2000s. After years of stunted yields due to a lack of soil nitrogen concentration, Mutharika's fertiliser subsidies had allowed most farmers to produce enough of a crop to at least meet their basic food requirements, and allowed many others to become net sellers of maize. This economic transition undoubtedly reduced food shortage concerns around the country, as reflected in the fact that by 2012 only 20 percent of AB respondents listed food shortages as an issue of foremost societal concern. With the destructive effects of drought having been limited as a result of FISP, branding around ending food shortages was perhaps no longer as politically potent by 2012 as it had been in the mid-2000s.

Moreover, while Mutharika had taken a political gamble in offering fertiliser subsidies on the scale and scope that AISP in 2005, by 2012 their provision had become politically sacrosanct. The president had initially stood alone in supporting fertiliser subsidies while both opposition political parties and the donor community criticised his aggressive agenda. Mutharika had thus striven to market the DPP as the party that would champion the food security issue for smallholders. The salience of that issue at the time is what allowed the president to leverage his brand into a 2009 election victory that featured pan-regional support.

Since the election of 2009 however, no national politician has suggested publicly that fertiliser subsidies be withdrawn, though there has been ample debate about reforms relating to its implementation. The fact that political elites have reached consensus on the notion that government should provide subsidies has therefore had the effect of depoliticising the issue.

By 2012 consequently, the potency of branding around subsidies had diminished for two reasons. First, a consistently higher crop yield nationwide than what the country had produced in 2005 meant that food sufficiency was more commonplace than it had been. Second, with subsidies continuing after Mutharika's death as an institutionalised offering of government, discussion of food security had become an essential aspect of all parties' manifestos. Cultivating a related political brand therefore was not likely to have been as beneficial for presidential candidates in 2014 as it had been during the 2000s.

### **Joyce Banda: emphasising poverty and economic reform**

Southern Africa's first female president rode into office on a wave of hope and optimism following the death of a president whose mismanagement of the economy and autocratic tendencies had contributed to general frustration and angst. In an April 2012 opinion piece, Mwangi Kimenyi described how Banda against this backdrop was "a sign of hope" and prompted Malawians to "talk of a better future."<sup>178</sup> Accordingly, Banda entered office with the enthusiasm of a frustrated people behind her. When the Round 5 AB survey was recorded in June 2012, Banda enjoyed a presidential approval rating of 68 percent (see above). The People's Party (PP) too, which she had founded in September 2011 in anticipation of contesting the May 2014 election, also received high praise from AB respondents in 2012. When asked which party they would vote for if an election were held tomorrow, 46 percent of respondents reported they would vote for PP, compared to 16 percent for the formerly ruling DPP.<sup>179</sup> This high level of approbation would be short-lived, however, as Banda's popularity declined precipitously since the mid-2012 poll was taken.

The Banda presidency, though it lasted less than half of a full presidential term, was characterised in its public emphasis by a complex set of policy priorities. On the one hand, Banda strove to portray herself as a leader who would champion the welfare of Malawians who had not benefitted from the country's economic growth and had suffered under its recent decline. This was Banda's "social brand." Among other pursuits, she lobbied for greater women's rights, advocated maternal and children's health, and lobbied for an expanded public recognition of women's roles in all economic and social spheres generally. This self-portrayal was shaped in part by her pre-political career as an activist and social progressive. Though pursuing these objectives was her ostensible "mission," Banda at the same time followed a reconciliatory approach with the donor community and pursued a reformist economic agenda. This was her "economic brand." Her immediate outreach to donors for collaboration in Malawi's national development placed her in stark contrast to Mutharika who had repeatedly spurned the IMF on several occasions when they insisted on structural adjustment. In an effort to "counterbrand" against her predecessor, Banda emphasised in

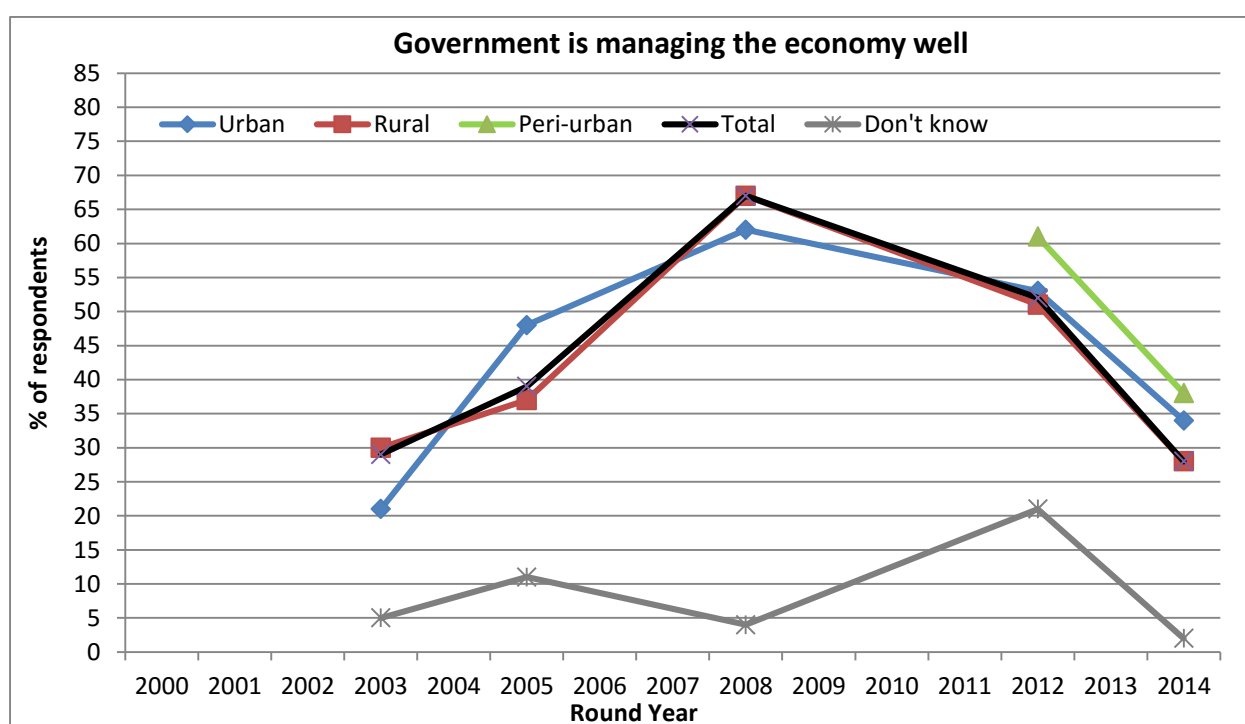
---

<sup>178</sup> Mwangi S. Kimenyi, "To Malawians, Joyce Banda's Presidency Brings Relief, Hope," *The Brookings Institution*, April 18, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/04/19-banda-malawi-kimenyi>.

<sup>179</sup> In the 2012 AB survey, 6 percent of respondents refused to divulge which party they would vote for; 10 percent said they did not know; 6 percent said they would not vote.

several interviews how in her early presidency she had to “clean up the mess that I have found” (March 2013) left by the previous administration.<sup>180</sup>

These public priorities of the Banda government can thus be summarised as addressing the societal problems (listed in the AB survey) of “Poverty/destitution,” “Management of the economy,” “Health,” “Discrimination/inequality,” “Gender issues/women’s rights,” and “Violence against women.” Among these several problems to which she had committed solving, the one that had the greatest salience to urban voters was management of the economy. With 30 percent of urban respondents in 2012 reporting that government should prioritise fixing the economy, the fact that Banda had promised to urgently address the 2011-2012 foreign exchange crisis set her up to win over a considerable percentage of the urban electorate.<sup>181</sup> But after devaluing the kwacha and implementing a government austerity plan, services were cut and prices remained high. Though Banda and the development partners had expected a faster rate of economic recovery, the expected growth rate did not return. In response, observers commented on how the IMF-supported structural adjustment programme may not have had achieved the promise of economic improvement that the reformers had expected it to. As development economist Thandika Mkandawire commented in the midst of the turmoil in 2013 for instance, “The social consequences of the [adjustment] policies are dire.”<sup>182</sup>



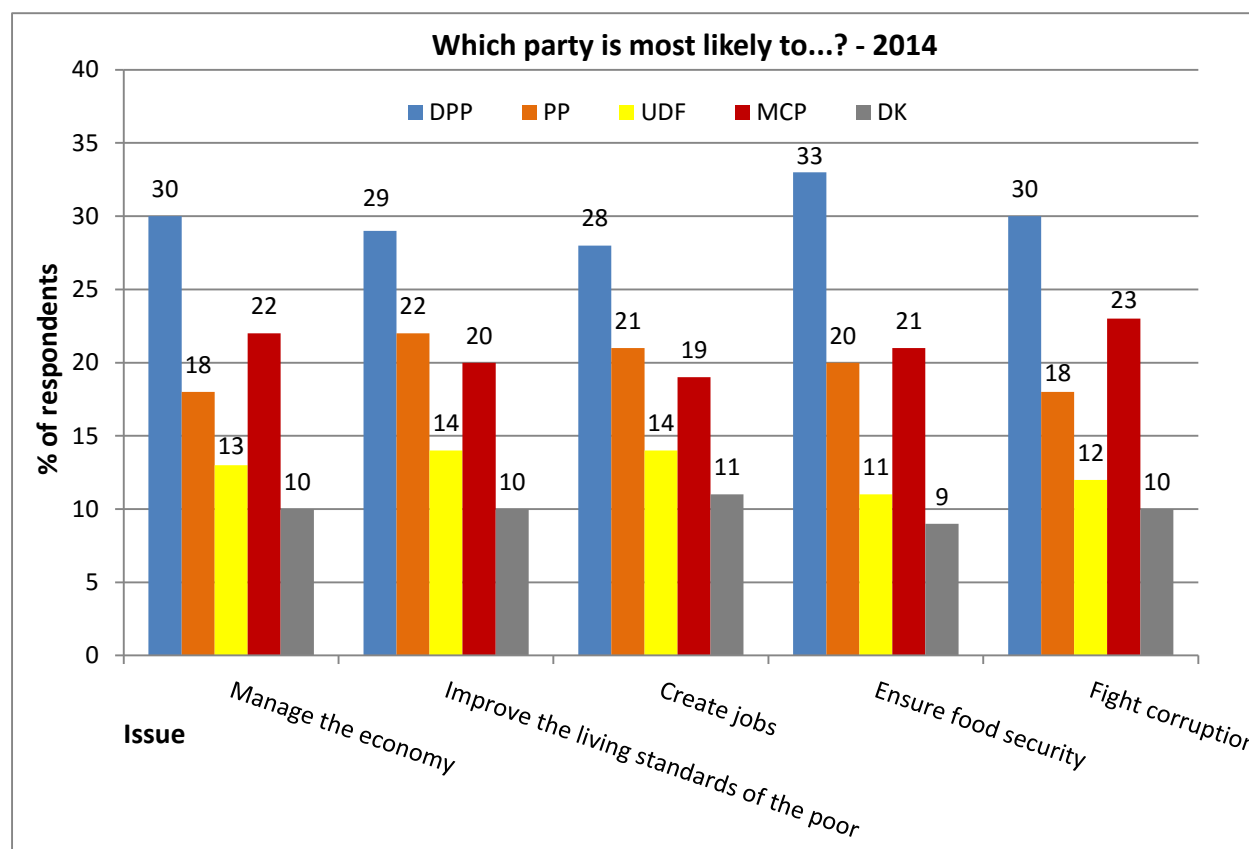
By 2014, many urban Malawians undoubtedly felt betrayed that the president had not followed through on her statements surrounding economic reform. Whereas 52 percent of respondents in 2012 had indicated the early PP government was managing the economy well,

<sup>180</sup> “Malawi Leader Defends China Links, Tells the West: ‘Don’t Tell Us What to Do’,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, March 22, 2013, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/03/22/malawi-leader-defends-china-links-tells-the-west-dont-tell-us-what-to-do/>.

<sup>181</sup> The president declared in her first State of the Nation Address how she would prioritise economic reforms.

<sup>182</sup> Elliot Ross, “Joyce Banda Has Bigger Problems than Madonna,” *Africa Is a Country*, April 24, 2013, <http://africasacountry.com/joyce-banda-madonna/>.

by 2014 only 28 percent said so. Survey-takers in 2014 also believed other parties could do a better job of managing the economy. Just 12 percent of urban respondents believed the PP was the party most likely to manage the economy well. This suggests how Banda's economic reformist branding effort did not convince many prospective voters that her party's approach offered improvements over what other parties would do. In fact, 33 percent of urban respondents believed that the DPP would be most able among all parties to manage the economy. A greater percentage of urban respondents, moreover, selected the MCP (21%) and UDF (13%) than did the ruling party.



Another prominent aspect of the Banda brand was her advocacy for the poor. Banda since her days as vice-president had marketed the PP among Malawi's political parties as being uniquely "pro-poor." To substantiate her claims to being the candidate most committed to alleviating poverty, Banda pursued personalised programmes through her presidential office that targeted poor women and other marginalised groups. Her efforts may have somewhat increased support for her candidacy in 2014—7 percent of AB respondents identified "Poverty/destitution" as the most important issue for government to address. But most Malawians it seems did not feel Banda's *modus operandi* would best contribute to poverty eradication. When asked in 2014 which party would be most likely to improve living standards of the poor, 29 percent of respondents identified the DPP, whereas 22 percent identified the PP. This finding suggests that while Banda's "handout" campaigns including PIPaHR and Mudzi Transformation Trust may have found favour with recipients, they did not reflect back onto a "pro-poor" image for the president, at least among most prospective voters. Whereas 49 percent of respondents in 2012 who commented positively or negatively on whether government was improving the standards of the poor indicated their approval for her government, by 2014 that percentage had fallen to less than 40 percent in this regard.

On food and other issues related to farming, which was listed as being of foremost importance to a combined 29 percent of respondents in 2012, the PP did not offer much that could distinguish it from the other parties. The PP was not strongly branded around these issues, and Banda for the most part opted to continue the policy infrastructure that had been left her by the previous administration. The one programmatic exception to this continuation was Banda's (prospective) implementation of the Farm Input Loan Programme (FILP). FILP, which the government rolled out in November 2013 as a parallel programme to FISP, was ostensibly to address some of the procedural snafus that arose from the distribution of fertiliser vouchers. The true principal purpose of the programme may have been different, however. As Brazys *et al.* (2015) noted, Banda had "built [FILP] around her and poorer districts" in an effort to cultivate a more pro-poor image of her candidacy.<sup>183</sup> FILP however had a limited impact as the government introduced the programme only about six months before the 2014 election.

The president's relative "non-focus" on food security likely diminished the public's confidence that she and the PP could ensure food availability, especially during times of increased need. At the three-month mark of her presidency, 53 percent of AB respondents who gave an opinion said that the PP government was doing well in ensuring that everyone had enough food to eat, as compared to 47 percent who said it was doing badly.<sup>184</sup> By 2014, respondents had considerably soured on the Banda government: 39 percent said her government was doing well and 61 percent said it was doing badly.<sup>185</sup> More telling perhaps was the fact that only 20 percent of respondents in 2014 believed the PP was the political party most likely to ensure everyone has enough to eat.<sup>186</sup> With a minor drought in 2012-2013 having increased angst around food availability, Banda's government responded with direct food aid. But as resounding support for Mutharika and AISP had revealed, Malawians have a strong preference for being able to grow their own food. The PP government's inability to respond in a similar fashion to how Mutharika had responded to drought in 2005 almost certainly hurt her stock with poor rural farmers who were the ones most likely to identify food shortages as being the societal problem that government should address.

A still-sputtering economy, high maize prices, and a national scandal in "Cashgate" were all likely reasons for why Banda's reputation among Malawians plummeted in a matter of twenty-two months. Among those respondents in 2012 who offered an opinion on Banda's presidency, 76 percent had favoured the president. In 2014, that rate had fallen to 39 percent. Banda's diminished approval rating among survey respondents reflected also a decline in support for the ruling party. The 46 percent of respondents who had identified the PP as the party they would choose in an election had fallen in 2014 to 19 percent, 8 points lower than the DPP and 2 points lower than the MCP. The actual presidential election which followed the AB poll by less than two months mirrored this result. The DPP had won albeit with a tentative 36 percent of the vote.

---

<sup>183</sup> Samuel Brazys, Peter Heaney, and Patrick P. Walsh, "From the Great Lakes to the Great Rift Valley: Does Strategic Economic Policy Explain the 2009 Malawi Election?" Working Paper (University College Dublin. Geary Institute, 2014), 51, <http://researchrepository.ucd.ie/handle/10197/5612>.

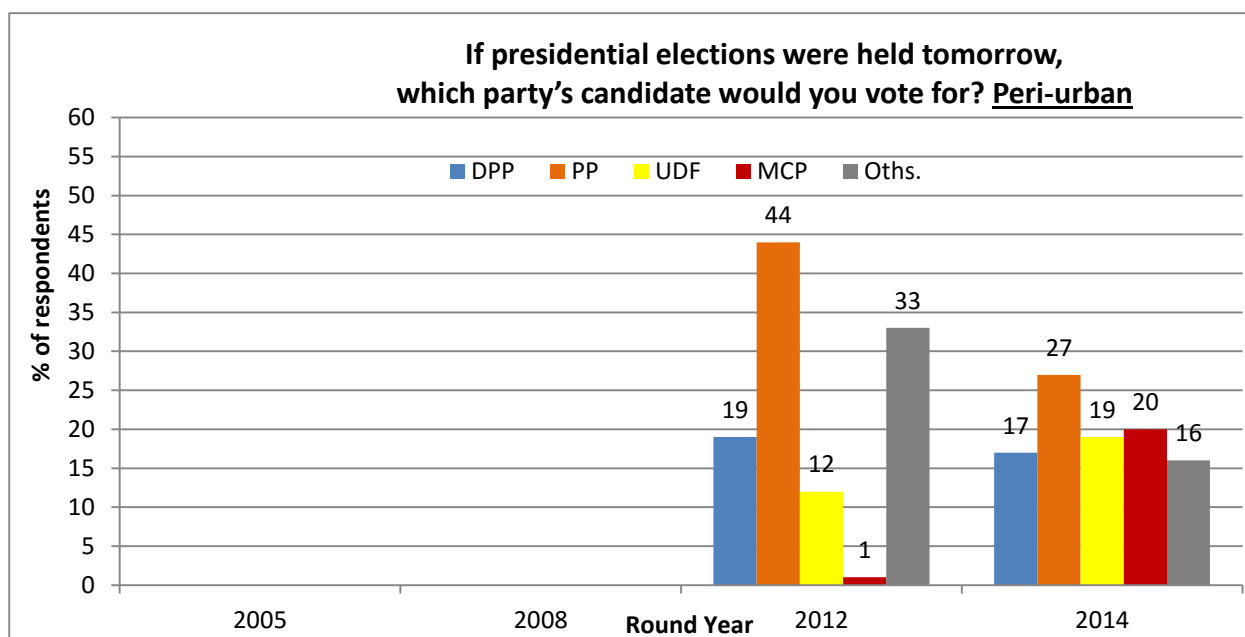
<sup>184</sup> In response to the question, 20 percent of respondents said they "Don't know."

<sup>185</sup> In response to the question, 2 percent of respondents said they "Don't know."

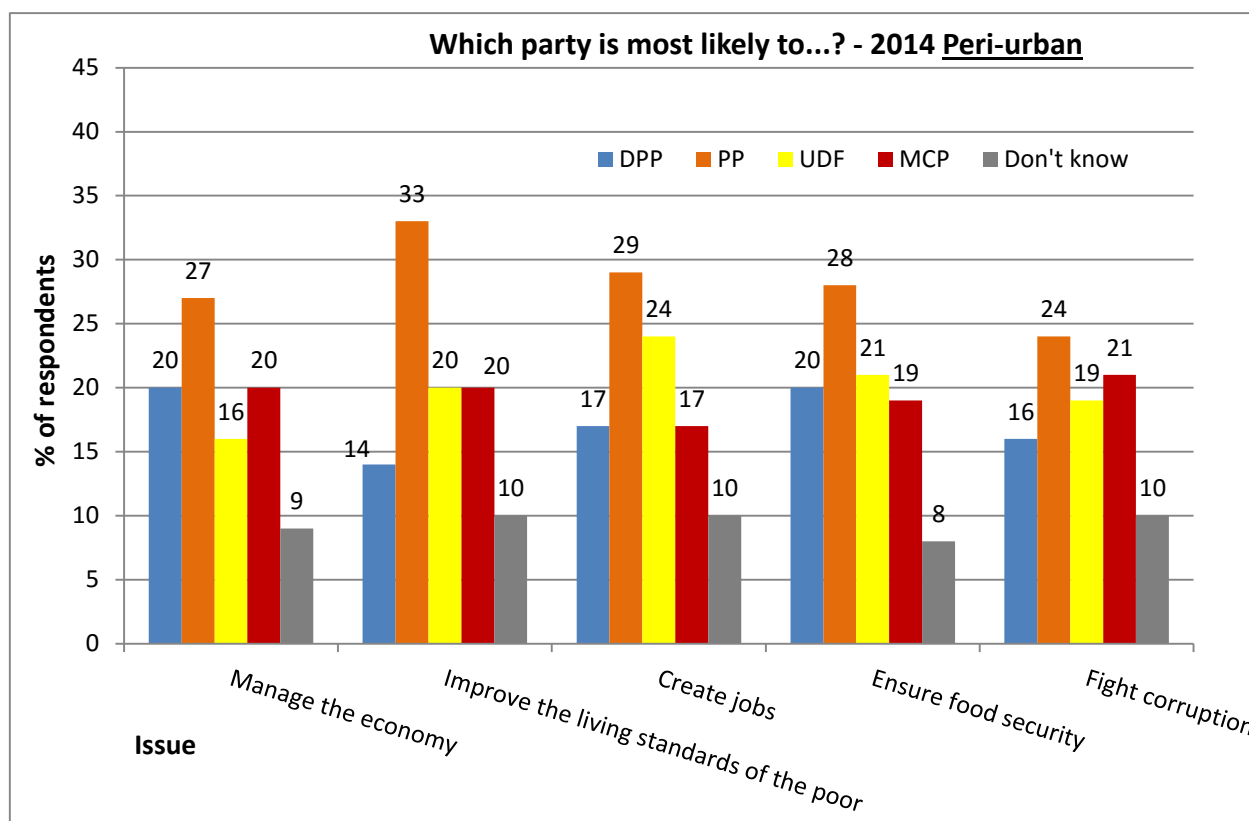
<sup>186</sup> In response to the question, 33 percent of respondents said DPP; 21 percent said MCP; 11 percent said UDF; 14 percent said None or "Don't know/Haven't heard."

## Banda and peri-urban respondents

One curiosity of the AB survey data is that peri-urban respondents evaluated Banda and the PP more favourably than rural or urban Malawians across several metrics.<sup>187</sup> For instance, half of peri-urban respondents in 2014 indicated that the government was doing a satisfactory job ensuring that everyone has enough to eat, compared to 41 percent of urban and 37 percent of rural respondents. The rate of approval had in fact increased since Banda had come into office. Likewise, 54 percent of peri-urban residents in 2014 approved of how government was improving living standards for the poor, compared to 47 of urban and 37 percent of rural respondents.



<sup>187</sup> The Round 5 (2012) survey includes three inhabitancy classifications: 'Cities,' 'Rural,' and a third category that is referred to interchangeably as 'Towns' and 'Peri-urban.' The latter is defined in the survey's explanation of variables as "towns and Bomas [sprawl around district capitals]." Respondents in this third category were estimated to be 7 percent of the population. In the Round 6 (2014) survey, only the term 'Peri-urban' is used, though it is not further defined. This population was estimated to be 3 percent of the population. This study makes the assumption that these categories in 2012 and 2014 are the same. There is no further differentiation of residents' inhabitancy beyond urban and rural in previous survey rounds.



Increases to approval for the government's handling of various societal issues were moreover correlated with approval for the party among peri-urban Malawians. When asked to indicate which party they believed would be the most likely to achieve six different outcomes, peri-urban respondents in 2014 selected the PP-Banda at a rate between 6 and 11 points higher than the group that was next-most favourable to the PP. For example, 28 percent of peri-urban respondents selected the PP as the party most likely to ensure people have enough food to eat. These respondents also indicated how they believed the PP would be best able to manage the economy (27%) and improve the living standards of the poor (33%). A much greater proportion of peri-urban respondents stated that the ruling party would control prices (60%) than did respondents as a whole (46%). When asked for which party they would vote in an election, a plurality of peri-urban respondents chose the PP (27%) whereas respondents as a total bloc chose the DPP (19%). Higher support for the PP and government was also correlated with higher relative support for the president among peri-urban residents, though support for her presidency on the whole did decrease. In 2014, the 47-percent approval rating that Banda had enjoyed among peri-urban residents well exceeded the 38-percent rating that she had across all respondent groups.<sup>188</sup>

The exact reasons for this greater favourability rating among peri-urban residents are not known, in part because there is little documentation on the nature of peri-urban life in Malawi. Cammack (2012) characterised the peri-urban squatter settlements that surround Lilongwe and Blantyre as “sites of grinding poverty, unnatural hazards, and poor public

<sup>188</sup> The fact that the peri-urban category was initiated in the Round 5 survey (2012) causes potential problems for data analysis. Since peri-urban respondents on the whole had considerably different views from urban respondents, their aggregation with urban respondents before Round 5 may have significantly shifted the urban respondent data.



goods delivery.”<sup>189</sup> Malawi’s most populous settlements include Ndirande, Mbayani, and Kachere in Blantyre, and Lauma and Cinsapo in Lilongwe. Residents of these townships are generally “impoverished translocals” whose livelihood strategies involve regular movement between villages and towns.<sup>190</sup>

The AB data corroborate some limited qualitative evidence that Banda paid special attention to which communities she was targeting her poverty programmes, ensuring that she demonstrated her pro-poor commitments to Malawians living in quasi-urban townships and towns. For instance, after having devalued the kwacha, Banda announced that she would implement or scale up several social protection programmes that would mitigate the negative effects of structural adjustment.



One example was the Public Works Programme.<sup>191</sup> PWP, which had been part of the government’s (donor-driven) social safety net agenda since 2003, was expanded in December 2012 by about US\$25 million. Banda’s decision to ceremonially launch the expansion from Bangwe Township near Blantyre suggests how she had targeted her programmes especially at alleviating peri-urban poverty.

Banda’s rollout of the PWP to peri-urban areas likely augmented her popularity among this demographic that had likely been relatively more marginalised during previous governments. As Chirwa and Dorward (2013) documented, between the 2004/05 and 2010/11 Integrated Household Surveys (IHS), Malawi’s population had grown by around 20 percent, while rural poverty in Malawi had decreased only marginally.<sup>192</sup> This undoubtedly forced many rural dwellers to seek employment opportunities for at least part of the year in urban areas, increasing strain on public resources. Peri-urban areas, however, lie in a sort of development “no man’s land”: township residents generally receive lesser public goods delivery than urban residents and may also not benefit from some social protection programmes that specifically target farmers.

The president’s overtures to peri-urban dwellers marked a contrast from how the previous government had tackled social challenges in peri-urban areas. “Some people wrongly think it is only people in rural areas ... that are living in abject poverty,” Banda noted a rally in Ndirande in which she touted the achievements of her Mudzi Transformation Trust. “No; it’s not only them because people in townships like in Ndirande here are worse

<sup>189</sup> Diana Cammack, “Peri-Urban Governance and the Delivery of Public Goods in Malawi,” 2012, 7, <http://abdn.ac.uk/sustainable-international-development/documents/20120123-appp-research-report03-peri-urban-governance-and-the-delivery-of-public-goods-in-malawi-2009-11-by-diana-cammack-january-2012.pdf>.

<sup>190</sup> For instance, Ndirande was documented as a “squatter colony” as far back as the early 1970s; see H. C. Norwood, “Ndirande: A Squatter Colony in Malawi,” *The Town Planning Review* 43, no. 2 (1972): 135–50.

<sup>191</sup> “Malawi President Launches K10bn Public Works Programme: Economic Recovery,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, December 9, 2012, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/12/09/malawi-president-launches-k10bn-public-works-programme-economic-recovery/>.

<sup>192</sup> Ephraim Chirwa and Andrew Dorward, *Agricultural Input Subsidies: The Recent Malawi Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 163.



off.”<sup>193</sup> Banda had travelled on multiple occasions before to Ndirande, including during her tenure as vice-president to convey her condolences to a family whose son had died at the hands of police during the July 2011 anti-Mutharika demonstrations.<sup>194</sup> During the protests, peri-urban residents were apparently “particularly agitated,” Cammack (2011) noted, as “DPP pickup trucks loaded with youths carrying pangas” filled the streets to quell the unrest.<sup>195</sup> Banda, by contrast, stood in solidarity with those peri-urban dwellers whom Mutharika had apparently persecuted.

As they comprise less than 5 percent of all Malawians, peri-urban support for Banda’s presidency could not have alone carried her candidacy in Malawi’s largest urban districts of Lilongwe and Blantyre. Of Malawi’s three largest cities, Banda only earned a plurality of votes in the northern city of Mzuzu. Nonetheless, the fact that Banda performed generally well according to peri-urban Malawians regardless of region provides significant further evidence that campaign issues—and not solely ethno-regional identity—informed voter choice in 2014.

### **Salience of election issues in 2014: what were the possibilities for national consensus?**

The data indicate that there was not likely to have been one societal challenge or issue that was of salience to voters, as there had likely been in 2009 in the form of food security. According to 27 percent of 2014 survey respondents, food security was once again the most important issue that government should address. Yet as has been argued, no candidate fronted a distinctive brand that could convince voters nationwide that his or her party would be the one to address food-related concerns. Even though the 2014 DPP had appropriated their Bingu-era messaging around food production—going so far as to literally incorporate images of the deceased president into party regalia—other parties and candidates had jumped on the food security bandwagon through their support of fertiliser subsidies. For her part, Banda built herself up as an economic reformer and anti-poverty crusader. Yet neither were these issues of principal concern to likely more than a collective fourth of the electorate. In conclusion, it was unlikely that any candidate would be able to achieve the degree of national consensus that Bingu had achieved in 2009.

The role that other 2014-specific election issues played in determining voter choice should not be underestimated, however. Most notably, Banda’s supposedly poor handling of the “Cashgate” scandal is thought to have reduced support for her candidacy in 2014.<sup>196</sup> The AB data, however, suggest how Banda’s handling of Cashgate, which likely predated her tenure of office, may actually have increased her popularity. A plurality of respondents (43%) said that government’s handling of Cashgate would make them likely to vote for Banda in the election as compared to 33 percent who said they would be unlikely to vote for her as a consequence. Another 11 percent said that Cashgate would not influence their vote. This

---

<sup>193</sup> “JB Storms Ndirande, Assures Better Life for Malawi Citizens,” *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, December 9, 2013, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/12/09/jb-storms-ndirande-assures-better-life-for-malawi-citizens/>.

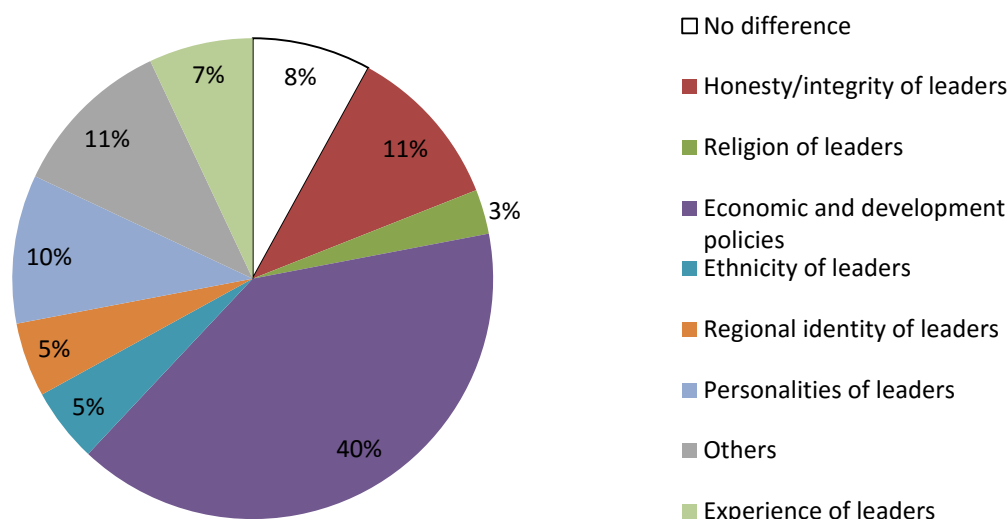
<sup>194</sup> Katie Lin, “VP Joyce Banda Visits Blantyre to Give Her Condolences - Blantyre,” *Demotix*, July 27, 2011, <http://www.demotix.com/news/768186/vp-joyce-banda-visits-blantyre-give-her-condolences-blantyre>.

<sup>195</sup> Cammack (2011) recounted how “poorer peri-urban residents were particularly agitated” by the July 2011 protests in which “DPP pickup trucks loaded with youths carrying pangas” filled the streets to intimidate locals. “Background Paper,” 2011, <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/appp/20111110-appp-background-paper-04-malawi-s-political-settlement-in-crisis-2011-by-diana-cammack-nov-2011.pdf>.

<sup>196</sup> Boniface Dulani and Kim Yi Dionne, “Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections in Malawi, May 2014,” *Electoral Studies* 36 (December 2014): 218–25, doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2014.08.005.

finding, contrary to anecdotal observations, suggests that Cashgate did not have a strong net effect on Banda's popularity, and if anything even increased slightly her electoral support as she cultivated her image as a reformer, having ordered dozens of arrests and commissioned an investigative report on the scandal.

### What is the most important difference between the ruling and opposition parties?



The outcome of the 2014 election, in which candidates generally won pluralities in areas only where they had ethnic or regional ties, suggests that election issues—and branding, therefore—did not play a paramount role in determining the result. At the same time, the role of issues and candidate positions should not be discounted. According to 40 percent of 2014 AB survey respondents, candidates' economic and development policies were the most important difference between the ruling and opposition parties. By comparison, just 13 percent of respondents identified the ethnicity or region of party leaders to be the most important difference between the parties. This finding suggests that the candidates' positions on substantive issues—not ethno-regional identity—were of greater salience to voters in 2014. Unfortunately, these somewhat contradictory insights cannot easily be reconciled and underscore the complexity of electoral choice in Malawi.<sup>197</sup> Ultimately, further research should do more to disaggregate respondent data according to demographic characteristics other than inhabitancy type including age, gender, and class. Understanding who are Malawi's "swing voters" would, moreover, bring additional insight into the potency of political branding to shape election outcomes.

### Works Cited—Data analysis

Brazys, Samuel, Peter Heaney, and Patrick P. Walsh. "From the Great Lakes to the Great Rift Valley: Does Strategic Economic Policy Explain the 2009 Malawi Election?" Working Paper. University College Dublin. Geary Institute, 2014.

<sup>197</sup> Further issues also clouded determination of election issue salience through analysis of the AB data. Gender norms in Malawi, for instance, are still predominant and likely coloured voters' beliefs about whether Banda was qualified to be president. Indeed, 37 percent of AB respondents agreed with the statement "Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women." This bias necessarily confounds any gender-independent comparison of candidates' political brands.

<http://researchrepository.ucd.ie/handle/10197/5612>.

Cammack, Diana. "Background Paper," 2011.

<http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/appp/20111110-appp-background-paper-04-malawi-s-political-settlement-in-crisis-2011-by-diana-cammack-nov-2011.pdf>.

———. "Peri-Urban Governance and the Delivery of Public Goods in Malawi," 2012.  
<http://abdn.ac.uk/sustainable-international-development/documents/20120123-appp-research-report03-peri-urban-governance-and-the-delivery-of-public-goods-in-malawi-2009-11-by-diana-cammack-january-2012.pdf>.

Chirwa, Ephraim, and Andrew Dorward. *Agricultural Input Subsidies: The Recent Malawi Experience*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Dulani, Boniface, and Kim Yi Dionne. "Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections in Malawi, May 2014." *Electoral Studies* 36 (2014): 218–25.  
doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2014.08.005.

Elliot Ross. "Joyce Banda Has Bigger Problems than Madonna." *Africa Is a Country*, April 24, 2013. <http://africasacountry.com/joyce-banda-madonna/>.

"JB Storms Ndirande, Assures Better Life for Malawi Citizens." *Malawi Nyasa Times*, December 9, 2013. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/12/09/jb-storms-ndirande-assures-better-life-for-malawi-citizens/>.

H. C. Norwood. "Ndirande: A Squatter Colony in Malawi." *The Town Planning Review* 43, no. 2 (1972): 135–50.

Katie Lin. "VP Joyce Banda Visits Blantyre to Give Her Condolences - Blantyre." *Demotix*, July 27, 2011. <http://www.demotix.com/news/768186/vp-joyce-banda-visits-blantyre-give-her-condolences-blantyre>.

"Malawi Leader Defends China Links, Tells the West: 'Don't Tell Us What to Do'." *Malawi Nyasa Times*, March 22, 2013. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/03/22/malawi-leader-defends-china-links-tells-the-west-dont-tell-us-what-to-do/>.

"Malawi President Launches K10bn Public Works Programme: Economic Recovery." *Malawi Nyasa Times*, December 9, 2012.  
<http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/12/09/malawi-president-launches-k10bn-public-works-programme-economic-recovery/>.

Mwangi S Kimenyi. "To Malawians, Joyce Banda's Presidency Brings Relief, Hope." *The Brookings Institution*, April 18, 2012.  
<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/04/19-banda-malawi-kimenyi>.

## **Works Cited—Main chapter**

### *Speeches by the Presidents*

Mutharika, Bingu wa. “Inauguration Address by the State President of the Republic of Malawi, 2008.

Mutharika, Bingu wa. State of the Nation Address by the State President of the Republic of Malawi,” 2008.

Banda, Joyce. State of the Nation Address by the State President of the Republic of Malawi,” 2012.

———. State of the Nation Address by the State President of the Republic of Malawi,” 2013.

### *Speeches by the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development*

Gondwe, Goodall. “2005-6 Budget Speech.”

———. “2007-8 Budget Speech.”

### *Manifestos*

#### Democratic Progressive Party

“A Government We Can Trust,” 2009.

“Towards a People-centred Government,” 2014.

#### Malawi Congress Party

“Reconciliation Reconstruction [*sic*] and Development,” 1999.

“Reconciliation Reconstruction AND DEVELOPMENT,” 2004.

“Nothing For Us Without Us,” 2014.

#### People’s Party

“It is Possible (Nzotheka),” 2014.

#### United Democratic Front

“Eradicating Poverty,” 1999.

“Forging Ahead with Social & Economic Transformation,” 2004.

### *Hansards*

Debates of the National Assembly of Malawi.

### *Key informant interviews*

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Organization/Position</u></b>
<i>Academia</i>	
Blessings Chinsinga	University of Malawi
Boniface Dulani	University of Malawi
Joseph Chunga	University of Malawi
Maxton Tsoka	University of Malawi
<i>Development partners</i>	
Patience Kanje	KfW
Chipso Msowoya	Macroeconomist, European Union
Lovely Chizimba	Vulnerability Advisor, Irish Aid
<i>Government</i>	
Lazarus Chakwera	President, Malawi Congress Party
Mary Shawa	Principal Secretary, Ministry of Gender
Paul Kwengwere	Finance/Development advisor, Malawi Congress Party
<i>NGO</i>	
Maki Kato	UNICEF—Malawi
<i>Parastatal organisations</i>	
Wilkins Mijiga	Reserve Bank of Malawi
<i>Other</i>	
Joseph Chavula	Regional Corporate Manager, FMB Bank
Thoko Mussa	Former government official
Margaret Mukwenha	Director, The Samaritan Trust
Chantal Elmont	Resident consultant, Ayala Consulting

### *Other interviews*

Bingu wa Mutharika, 2009.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mzi\\_5iOVixc&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mzi_5iOVixc&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

Joyce Banda, November 24, 2014.

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2014/11/24/interview-malawis-former-president-dr-joyce-banda-on-life-in-politics/>.

———, August 28, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yS0FR2XDDSU>.

*Madam President: Meeting Malawi's Joyce Banda*, 2012.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBmaeOM1omY&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBmaeOM1omY&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

#### *Government and Parastatal documents*

“1998 Integrated Household Survey and Poverty Analysis.” National Statistics Office, 1998. <http://www.nsomalawi.mw/publications/integrated-household-survey/1998-integrated-household-survey.html>.

The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee. “National Food Security Forecast: April 2013 to March 2014,” 2013. <http://www.wfp.org/content/malawi-national-food-security-forecast-april-2013-march-2014>.

Republic of Malawi. “National Social Support Policy,” July 2012.

World Bank. “Malawi Public Expenditure Review.” Poverty Reduction and Economic Management 1 Africa Region, November 2013.

#### *Media reports*

“A Long Way to Go.” The Economist, March 19, 2013. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/baobab/2013/03/malawi>.

“Bingu Rejects IMF Devaluation Call, Speaks on Fuel Crisis.” Accessed June 9, 2015. <http://maravi.blogspot.com/2011/06/nyasatimes-bingu-rejects-imf.html>.

“Chakwera Attacks JB on Hand-Outs in Zomba.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed March 19, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2014/05/08/chakwera-attacks-jb-on-hand-outs-in-zomba/>.

“Chakwera Bemoans Handouts.” Afriem.org. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.afriem.org/2014/05/chakwera-bemoans-handouts-2/>.

“CSOs Thrash JB on Mudzi Transformation Trust, One Family One Cow: We Need Decisions That Transcend Political Considerations.” Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://malawivoice.com/2013/06/20/csos-thrash-jb-on-mudzi-transformationtrust-one-family-one-cow-we-need-decisions-that-transcend-political-considerations-81875/>.

“‘Cut the Chaff’: JB’s Mudzi Trust Will Either Duplicate LDF or Kill It off.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/06/01/cut-the-chaff-jbs-mudzi-trust-will-either-duplicate-ldf-or-kill-it-off/>.

“Goodall Mocks JB’s Mudzi Transformation Trust.” The Malawi Oracle Times. Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.orakonews.com/goodall-mocks-jbs-mudzi-transformation-trust/>.

Henry Nyaka. “Malawi: One Cow a Family Initiative Goes to Rumphi.” Malawi News Agency. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201307170205.html>.

“IMF Reforms Spark Malawi Consumer Backlash.” Equal Times. Accessed June 10, 2015. <http://www.equaltimes.org/imf-reforms-spark-malawi-consumer-backlash>.

- “JB Attacks Poverty: ‘I Know Malawians Are Suffering.’” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 9, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/07/22/jb-attacks-poverty-i-know-malawians-are-suffering/>.
- “JB Hands over Mudzi House to Gogo Nyasoko of Kasungu.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 7, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/12/03/jb-hands-over-mudzi-house-to-gogo-nyasoko-of-kasungu/>.
- “JB Increasingly Upbeat to Win Malawi Elections.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2014/05/11/jb-increasingly-upbeat-to-win-malawi-elections/>.
- “JB Launches ‘a Cow a Family’ Initiative: Pledges Houses for Malawi Flood Victims.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 8, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/02/28/jb-launches-a-cow-a-family-initiative-pledges-houses-for-malawi-flood-victims/>.
- “JB Says ‘one Cow per Family’ to Benefit 1m Families in Malawi.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 8, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/04/05/jb-says-one-cow-per-family-to-benefit-1m-families-in-malawi/>.
- “JB Storms Ndirande, Assures Better Life for Malawi Citizens.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 7, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/12/09/jb-storms-ndirande-assures-better-life-for-malawi-citizens/>.
- “JB Takes Food Distribution Exercise to Mangochi.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed May 26, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/11/09/jb-takes-food-distribution-exercise-to-mangochi/>.
- “JB Vows to Continue pro-Poor Initiative: Seeks Her Own Mandate.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed May 26, 2014. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2014/05/11/jb-vows-to-continue-pro-poor-initiative-seeks-her-own-mandate/>.
- Jeffrey D. Sachs. “How Malawi Fed Its Own People.” The New York Times, April 19, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/20/opinion/how-malawi-fed-its-own-people.html>.
- “Joyce Banda Has Bigger Problems than Madonna.” Africa Is a Country. Accessed June 10, 2015. <http://africasacountry.com/joyce-banda-madonna/>.
- “Malawi Announces Cabinet Reshuffle.” Scotland Malawi Partnership, May 11, 2007. <http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/news.html?newsid=34>.
- “Malawi Ex-President Muluzi Farewell Speech at UDF Convention.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 1, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/10/31/malawi-ex-president-muluzi-farewell-speech-at-udf-convention/>.
- “Malawi Leader Chooses Foreign Minister as Running Mate.” Reuters. February 6, 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/02/06/ozatp-malawi-election-idAFJOE5150KO20090206>.

- “Malawi Leader Defends China Links, Tells the West: ‘Don’t Tell Us What to Do’.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 12, 2015.  
<http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/03/22/malawi-leader-defends-china-links-tells-the-west-dont-tell-us-what-to-do/>.
- “Malawi Leader Lay Foundation Stone for 7,500 Houses: Chinese Company to Build.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 7, 2015.  
<http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/07/02/malawi-leader-lay-foundation-stone-for-7500-houses-chinese-company-to-build/>.
- “Malawi President Banda Leaves for US for UN General Assembly.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 7, 2015. <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/09/16/malawi-president-banda-leaves-for-us-for-un-general-assembly/>.
- “Malawi President Launches K10bn Public Works Programme: Economic Recovery.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed May 25, 2015.  
<http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/12/09/malawi-president-launches-k10bn-public-works-programme-economic-recovery/>.
- “Malawi Sells Presidential Jet to Feed Poor.” The Sydney Morning Herald. Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://www.smh.com.au/world/malawi-sells-presidential-jet-to-feed-poor-20130906-2t944.html>.
- “Malawi’s Leader Makes Safe Childbirth Her Mission.” Opinionator. Accessed May 20, 2015. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/06/malawis-leader-makes-safe-childbirth-her-mission/>.
- “Malawi’s President Rules ‘His Way.’” BBC, September 1, 2004, sec. Africa.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3618948.stm>.
- “Malawi: Vice President Joyce Banda Launches New Party.” Accessed June 3, 2015.  
<http://vibeghana.com/2011/09/08/malawi-president-joyce-banda-launches-new-party/>.
- Masimba Tafirenyika. “What Went Wrong? Lessons from Malawi’s Food Crisis.” Africa Renewal Online, January 2013. <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/january-2013/what-went-wrong-lessons-malawi%E2%80%99s-food-crisis>.
- Memory Kutengule,. “Malawi: Almost K1 Billion Spent On Mudzi Transformation Trust Project.” Malawi News Agency, November 25, 2013.  
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201311260092.html>.
- Molalet Tsedeke. “‘It Is Possible for Africa to Become the Food Basket of the World,’ Says Mutharika.” Nepad.org, October 28, 2010.  
<http://www.nepad.org/foodsecurity/news/1786/%E2%80%99Cit-possible-africa-become-food-basket-world%E2%80%9D-mutharika>.
- “Mudzi Transformation Trust to Continue.” Malawi24. Accessed June 12, 2015.  
<http://malawi24.com/2014/07/07/mudzi-transformation-trust-to-continue-pp/>.



- “Mutharika Wants Feedback on Proposals to Tackle Malawi ‘intellectual Crisis.’” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed March 24, 2015.  
<http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/04/19/mutharika-wants-feedback-on-proposals-to-tackle-malawi-intellectual-crisis/>.
- “Mzimba Chiefs Happy with Mudzi Trust.” Malawi Nyasa Times. Accessed June 7, 2015.  
<http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/09/22/mzimba-chiefs-happy-with-mudzi-trust/>.
- Patrick McGroarty. “Malawi President Looks to Ride Free Cows to New Term.” Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2014, sec. World.  
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304908304579565453088446512>.
- “President Banda Outlines Her Vision for Malawi.” VOA. Accessed March 18, 2015.  
<http://www.voanews.com/content/president-banda-outlines-her-vision-for-malawi/1588981.html>.
- “Presidential Initiative on Hunger Reduction to Realize K7 Billion | Banthu Times: Breaking News, Sports, Business, Entertainment, Online Malawi News.” Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://banthutimes.com/presidential-initiative-on-hunger-reduction-to-realize-k7-billion/>.
- “President Joyce Banda on Women’s Health & Empowerment in Malawi,” 2013.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzcoHYNR0yA&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzcoHYNR0yA&feature=youtube_gdata_player).
- “Queries over Joyce Banda Maize.” Face of Malawi. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.faceofmalawi.com/2012/11/queries-over-joyce-banda-maize/>.
- Sherilee Lakmidas. “Newsmaker: New Malawi President a Women’s Champion.” Reuters, April 7, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/07/us-malawi-banda-idUSBRE83609E20120407>.
- “Southern Region Shuns MCP Once More, As Chakwera Scorns JB’s One Cow Per Family Initiative.” Malawi Voice. Accessed March 23, 2015.  
<http://malawivoice.com/2014/05/08/southern-region-shuns-mcp-chakwera-scorns-jbs-one-cow-per-family-initiative/>.
- Tenthani, Raphael. “Joyce Banda: Malawi’s First Female President.” *BBC News*, April 10, 2012. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17662916>.
- Teresa Buerkle. “Malawi Facing Serious Food Crisis: More than 4.2 Million People in Need of Assistance.” FAO Newsroom. August 11, 2005.  
<http://www.fao.org/Newsroom/en/news/2005/107298/index.html>.
- “The Journey of Dr Joyce Hilda Banda, the President of Malawi.” Women Presidents. Accessed March 16, 2015.  
<https://wethewomenourjourneys.wordpress.com/2013/11/28/dr-joyce-hilda-bandatthe-president-of-malawi/>.
- “Why We Care.” Accessed March 23, 2015.  
<http://www.why-we-care.org/global-leaders-council/joyce-banda>.

## Secondary sources

- Afrobarometer. "A Country Turning Blue?: Political Party Support and the End of Regionalism in Malawi." Briefing Paper, November 2009.
- Blessings Chinsinga. "The Reality of the Zero-Aid Budget in Malawi." *Effective States*. Accessed June 13, 2015. <http://www.effective-states.org/the-reality-of-the-zero-aid-budget-in-malawi/>.
- "Bingu Wa Mutharika | Biography - President of Malawi." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed May 28, 2015. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1016527/Bingu-wa-Mutharika>.
- Bookstein, Amelia, and Max Lawson. "Briefing: Famine in Southern Africa." *African Affairs* 101, no. 405 (October 1, 2002): 635–41.
- Booth, David, Diana Cammack, Jane Harrigan, Edge Kanyongolo, Mike Mataure, and Naomi Ngwira. "Drivers of Change and Development in Malawi," 2006. <http://41.87.6.35:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/280>.
- Brazys, Samuel, Peter Heaney, and Patrick P. Walsh. "From the Great Lakes to the Great Rift Valley: Does Strategic Economic Policy Explain the 2009 Malawi Election?" Working Paper. University College Dublin. Geary Institute, February 28, 2014. <http://researchrepository.ucd.ie/handle/10197/5612>.
- Cammack, Diana. "Malawi in Crisis, 2011–12." *Review of African Political Economy* 39, no. 132 (June 1, 2012): 375–88. doi:10.1080/03056244.2012.688651.
- Cammack, Diana, Fred Golooba-Mutebi, Fidelis Kanyongolo, and Tam O'Neil. "Neopatrimonial Politics, Decentralisation and Local Government: Uganda and Malawi in 2006." *Good Governance, Aid Modalities and Poverty Reduction: Linkages to the Millennium Development Goals and Implications for Irish Aid, Research Project (RP-05-GG) of the Advisory Board for Irish Aid. Dec, 2007*. <https://blids.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/CammacketalGAPWP2.pdf>.
- Chinsinga, Blessings, and Colin Poulton. "Beyond Technocratic Debates: The Significance and Transience of Political Incentives in the Malawi Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP)." *Development Policy Review* 32, no. s2 (November 1, 2014): s123–50. doi:10.1111/dpr.12079.
- Chinsinga, Blessings. "Reclaiming Policy Space: Lessons from Malawi's 2005/2006 Fertilizer Subsidy Programme." *Policy Brief No 13* (2007). [http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/futureagriculture/fac\\_research\\_paper\\_no6.pdf](http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/futureagriculture/fac_research_paper_no6.pdf).
- Chikaya-Banda, Janet. "Duty of Care: Constitutional and Law Reform, in Malawi." *Africa Research Institute, Policy Voices*, September 2012.
- . "The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy Processes in Malawi: A Case Study of the Fertilizer Subsidy Programme," 2012. <http://mobile.opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/2249>.

- Chirambo, Reuben Makayiko. "Democracy as a Limiting Factor for Politicised Cultural Populism in Malawi." *Africa Spectrum*, 2009, 77–94.
- Chirwa, Ephraim, and Andrew Dorward. *Agricultural Input Subsidies: The Recent Malawi Experience*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Chunga, Joseph J. "Examining the Relevance of Political Parties in Malawi," 2014. [http://afrobarometer.org/files/documents/briefing\\_papers/afrobrieffno125.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/files/documents/briefing_papers/afrobrieffno125.pdf).
- Devereux, Stephen, and Ian Macauslan. "Review of Social Protection Instruments in Malawi." *Desk Study for DFID Malawi*, 2006. <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/MalawiSocialProtectionReview.pdf>.
- Dorward, Andrew, Ephraim Chirwa, Mirriam Matita, Wezi Mhango, Peter Mvula, Ed Taylor, and Karen Thorne. "Evaluation of the 2012/13 Farm Input Subsidy Programme, Malawi." *Report Prepared for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Lilongwe*, 2013. [http://wadonda.com/Dorward\\_et\\_al\\_2013\\_FISP\\_Evaluation\\_2012\\_13\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://wadonda.com/Dorward_et_al_2013_FISP_Evaluation_2012_13_Final_Report.pdf).
- Dorward, Andrew, Bruce Guenther, and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler. "Agriculture and Social Protection in Malawi," 2009. <http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/2358>.
- Dulani, Boniface, and Kim Yi Dionne. "Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections in Malawi, May 2014." *Electoral Studies* 36 (December 2014): 218–25. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2014.08.005.
- Ferree, Karen, and Jeremy Horowitz. "Ties That Bind? The Rise and Decline of Ethno-Regional Partisanship in Malawi, 1994–2009." *Democratization* 17, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 534–63. doi:10.1080/13510341003700394.
- "Food Crises in Africa in the Last 30 Years," 2013. <http://www.harvesthelp.org.uk/>.
- Foster, Mick, Adrian Fozzard, Felix Naschold, and Tim Conway. "Poverty Reduction Strategy and Public Expenditure in Five African Countries," 2002. <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/2051.pdf>.
- Gabay, Clive. "Two 'transitions': The Political Economy of Joyce Banda's Rise to Power and the Related Role of Civil Society Organisations in Malawi." *Review of African Political Economy* 41, no. 141 (July 3, 2014): 374–88. doi:10.1080/03056244.2014.901949.
- Gaynor, Niamh. "Between Citizenship and Clientship: The Politics of Participatory Governance in Malawi." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 801–16. doi:10.1080/03057070.2010.527637.

- Harrigan, Jane. "Food Insecurity, Poverty and the Malawian Starter Pack: Fresh Start or False Start?" *Food Policy* 33, no. 3 (June 2008): 237–49. doi:10.1016/j.foodpol.2007.09.001.
- Janet Fleischman, and Julia Nagel. "President Joyce Banda: New Focus on Women's Health and Empowerment in Malawi," January 8, 2013. <http://www.smartglobalhealth.org/blog/entry/president-joyce-banda-new-focus-on-womens-health-and-empowerment-in-malawi/>.
- Kalebe-Nyamongo, Chipiliro, and Heather Marquette. "Elite Attitudes Towards Cash Transfers and the Poor in Malawi," 2014. <http://publications.dlprog.org/EliteAttitudesCTs.pdf>.
- Khonanu Ontebetse. "Khama to Donate 150 Cattle to Malawi." *Sunday Standard*, April 2, 2013.
- Kimenyi, Mwangi S. "The Erosion of Democracy in Malawi: President Bingu Wa Mutharika's Unholy Conversion." *The Brookings Institution*. Accessed June 9, 2015. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/03/09-democracy-malawi-kimenyi>.
- Kishindo, Paul. "Community Project Funding in Malawi under the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) Demand-Driven Approach: Potential for Perpetuating Imbalances in Development." *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 15, no. 1 (2000): 5–14.
- Kondowe, Wellman. "Presidents and Ideologies: A Transitivity Analysis of Bingu Wa Mutharika's Inaugural Address." *International Journal of Language and Linguistics* 2, no. 3 (2014): 174. doi:10.11648/j.ijll.20140203.16.
- Longley, Catherine, John Coulter, and Roy Thompson. "Malawi Rural Livelihoods Starter Pack Scheme 1998-99 Evaluation Report." *ODI, London*, 1999. <http://www.reading.ac.uk/ssc/n/TIP%20Archive%20CD/related%20materials/SP1/SPS1%20evaluation%20report/evaluation%20report.pdf>.
- Maliro, Dyton. "Comparison of Agricultural Input Subsidies and Social Cash Transfers as Policies for Reducing Vulnerability to Hunger in Malawi." University of East Anglia, 2011. <http://core.kmi.open.ac.uk/download/pdf/2778813.pdf>.
- Ntata, Z. Allan. *Trappings of Power: Political Leadership in Africa*. AuthorHouse, 2012.
- Osei-Hwedie, Bertha. "The Role of Ethnicity in Multi-Party Politics in Malawi and Zambia." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 16, no. 2 (1998): 227–47.
- Phiri, Horace, and Abdi Khalil Edriss. "Neopatrimonialism and Agricultural Protection." *International Food Policy Research Institute*, November 2013. <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/masspwp1.pdf>.
- Said, Jonathan, and Khwima Singini. "The Political Economy Determinants of Economic Growth in Malawi." BWPI, The University of Manchester, 2014. [http://businessenvironment.org/dyn/be/docs/291/esid\\_wp\\_40\\_said\\_singini.pdf](http://businessenvironment.org/dyn/be/docs/291/esid_wp_40_said_singini.pdf).

Shawa, Lester Brian. "The Big-Man Syndrome as a Security Threat in Malawi: A Critical Theory Perspective." *Southern African Peace and Security Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 44–56.

"Unravelling the 'miracle' of Malawi's Green Revolution." GRAIN, January 14, 2010.  
<http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4075-unravelling-the-miracle-of-malawi-s-green-revolution>.

van Donge, Jan Kees. "Kamuzu's Legacy: The Democratization of Malawi: Or Searching for the Rules of the Game in African Politics." *African Affairs*, 1995, 227–57.

Vencovsky, Daniel. "Presidential Term Limits in Africa," 2007.  
[http://reference.sabinet.co.za/webx/access/electronic\\_journals/accordc/accordc\\_2007\\_n2\\_a4.pdf](http://reference.sabinet.co.za/webx/access/electronic_journals/accordc/accordc_2007_n2_a4.pdf).

Ward, Michael. "Perceptions of Poverty: The Historical Legacy\*." *IDS Bulletin* 30, no. 2 (1999): 23–32.

Ware, Anthony. *Development in Difficult Sociopolitical Contexts: Fragile, Failed, Pariah*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

---

The purpose of this thesis has been to contribute to the nascent scholarship on the political dynamics that underpin welfare state-building in Africa. I documented how presidential incumbents in Botswana and Malawi have pursued “political brands” constructed via shifts in rhetorical, symbolic, and policy emphases vis-à-vis poverty reduction with the aim of enhancing support for their incumbency and party. The finding that political actors modify their brands in response to electoral competition concurs with Niles’ observation that “even limited electoral competition ... will create incentives for politicians to broaden their support base” (see Hickey, 2007). Having made the case for branding praxis, I then offered some insight into the salience of political branding during select elections, making use of public opinion data collected by the Afrobarometer survey project in both countries. Although my conclusions were necessarily tentative given the data’s limited nature and the complexity of voter choice in both countries, this exploration of “what brands work” suggests some directions for further research.

The findings in Chapter 2 revealed how brand development in Botswana has resulted in a convergence of the parties on matters of social policy. The BDP’s response since 1994 to opposition party claims of being “the only political force that cares for the economically marginalized” (Elischer, 2013) has been to expand the welfare state through a variety of social protection schemes. The BDP government under Masire and Mogae made initial steps to head off such opposition claims through the provision of cash transfer schemes to women, children, and the elderly. Under Ian Khama, the BDP has expanded public employment programmes (PEPs) that were once contingent on drought but are now permanent fixtures of the welfare state. This shift in emphasis has further transformed the brand of the BDP and its leadership from being neoliberal “cattle barons and traders” (Hickey, 2007) to proactive poverty-fighting campaigners. Such a transformation has accompanied a considerable expansion of the welfare state in both scope and financial investment. As a consequence of this expansion, the ruling party and major opposition parties have converged to the extent that some observers have declared that Botswana is “increasingly becoming a two-party system” (Lekorwe, 2000; Burchard; 2013).

Whereas convergent branding has been the trend of the past several decades with respect to politics in Botswana, Chapter 3 found that Malawian presidential incumbents have used a divergent branding strategy to set themselves apart from the political field. For Bingu wa Mutharika and Joyce Banda, the costs of remaining in their parties— i.e., the risk of not winning the next presidential election—were greater than the costs of defecting. To defect, however, necessitated the development of new political identities, for which both incumbents chose poverty-oriented branding strategies that could differentiate themselves from a multipartisan field. This conclusion represents a concurrence with Svasand’s work (2013; see introduction) that Malawian parties present different policy programmes and somewhat of a departure from van de Walle’s argument (2003) that African parties exhibit “programmatic homogeneity” where “party platforms diverge little and campaign speeches rarely discuss policy issues” (see also Young, 2014). Though it is at times difficult to separate political actors in Malawi on the traditional left-right spectrum, evidence for divergent branding nonetheless suggests that elites ascribe value to brand differentiation.

This thesis thus contributes to an emergent literature on political branding that understands political candidates and parties as not being the only basis for voter choice, but as embodiments of symbolic and policy elements to which voters are also responsive. “Successful leaders,” Needham (2006) argued with reference to British and American politicians, “are those who are able to offer personalised brands, with simple, aspirational and consistent messages, built on a small number of symbolic policies.” Though the use of Needham’s analysis to study African politics may not have been appropriate even twenty years ago, recent scholarship identifying ideas and incumbent performance as having increasingly important roles to play in African democracies suggests that such comparisons have new value and applicability. Poteete’s argument (2012), for instance, that “even in the absence of government turnover, increasing electoral competition ... in turn influences policy making, institutional reforms and political practices” suggests strongly that African politicians recognise the importance of brand projection. By offering two more analyses of elections through the lens of brand analysis, this thesis supplies a framework for further examination of Africa’s political economies.

There is thus a strong potential to apply the welfare branding analysis methodology practiced in this thesis to other countries in the region with competitive election systems. Zambia’s recent election history presents one likely fruitful case for study. It was there that Michael Sata won the presidential election of 2011, having paralleled Bingu wa Mutharika’s tactic by founding the Patriotic Front in 2001 after President Frederick Chiluba passed him over as his successor. Sata launched campaigns in 2001, 2006, and 2008—all contested by three major parties—in which he engaged in “street politics” (Resnick, 2012) that featured overtures to the urban poor including promises to introduce cash transfers (Siachiwena, 2014). By contrast, Zambia’s Minister of Finance Ng’andu Magande (2003-2008) of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy branded against cash transfers, arguing that they promoted laziness, and touted instead a “pro-growth” development strategy (Kabandula and Seekings, 2014). Exploring the motivations for these divergent discourses around poverty reduction could engender greater understanding of the forces that shape political behaviour and welfare reform in Zambia.

Before other scholars proceed with analysis of additional African states however, it is critical to note some of the methodological limitations of this thesis. Most critically, this study was limited by the English-language bias of its sources. Any discourses relating to poverty, welfare, and a variety of other salient topics that were presented in an indigenous language—despite their potential value—were not incorporated into this analysis. Given the fact that verbal interactions between political elites and voters generally take place in indigenous languages, this gap in primary-source data was likely to have been significant. Though non-English vocabulary did enter into my analysis, their translation to English and application to my broader arguments may have resulted in a loss of some of the indigenous connotations that are particular to the cultural milieu from which they arose.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, interviews and quotations sourced from media reports were biased in favour of English-speaking citizens, whose generally elite social status meant that their viewpoints represented those of only a subset of the broader society. Future analyses of branding in the context of elections and welfare policy reform must therefore do more to consider the cultural characteristics of the society under study.

---

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the starkest example of this translational shortcoming was the concept of *mananeo a ga Rara*, which translates most expediently to English as “Our Father’s programmes.” However, its true meaning is not directly translatable.

Future research could also take a more nuanced approach to branding in giving consideration to other aspects of political elite behaviour. Distinctions between clientelistic and “collective goods” programmes, for instance, were not explicated in this thesis, though such differences could help explain the degree to which programmes become personalised, as well as the success of branding generally. As scholars follow the evolution of the brands examined in this study, it will be important to examine their “lifespan” and transferability to other elites within the same party. If the case of the Mutharika brothers is any indication, branding may be transferrable across presidential candidates, at least those with the same name. In future elections however, such branding may not have the same potency to stimulate voter support, as seems to have been the case in Malawi’s recent election. Branding of non-presidential contenders was also a topic not explored in this thesis. Knowing the extent to which, for instance, the BDP parliamentary candidates—who were the ones actually on the 2014 ballot—benefitted from Khama’s social protection-oriented branding would be critical to better understanding the prospects for branding success in Botswana. New research could thus follow these pathways to discern more about the nature of voting behaviour in these two countries.

This thesis through the lens of branding analysis added insight to our understanding of political elite behaviour with respect to elections, but it also attempted to offer information about the behaviour of prospective voters. Through analysis of public opinion data, this thesis contributed some preliminary insights into the salience of political branding in Botswana and Malawi. It found that in Malawi, assurances of food security are likely to be most persuasive. In Botswana, the data showed that voters are likely to be most responsive to candidates’ ideas or record on reducing unemployment. I argued that incumbent branding around solutions to these respective challenges was likeliest to be the most influential brand-oriented venture that the candidates could make. To the extent that these election issues and incumbent performance matter to voters—and the recent literature suggests increasingly that they do—then branding is likely to take on an ever more significant role in the shaping of voter behaviour.

However, while these data explicate respondent opinions on various issues that are often important in elections, this thesis offered few concrete insights on the motivations of voters specifically. To explore further the prospects for branding success, future research should investigate who are Botswana and Malawi’s core and “swing” voters, and identify what factors determine how they vote. (Weghorst and Lindberg’s 2013 study on the 2008 election in Ghana may provide a valuable model to investigate this question.) A greater understanding of the quantity and character of swing voters and how these voters would be responsive to various political messaging strategies and policies centred on poverty reduction (or otherwise), moreover, would contribute important insights into the electoral salience of branding. A more nuanced study of voting behaviour would also do well to explore differences in survey response based on region, class, gender, and age characteristics, whereas this study disaggregated data based on urban/rural distinctions only. Despite these limitations, this thesis makes an important intellectual and methodological contribution to the literature of welfare branding in Africa. Determining more answers to the questions of “what welfare strategies work politically in Africa and why,” however, will require further research.

A greater understanding of branding behaviour in Africa has important implications, moreover, for the crafting of development policy. In Malawi in particular, development partners have a critical role to play in ensuring the viability of public programmes. The scaling down of the Starter Pack Scheme in the early 2000s and opposition to Mutharika’s



input subsidy scheme in 2005 revealed a failure on the part of the development partners to “acknowledge the powerful political momentum behind input subsidies” (Devereux and White, 2010). Antagonism between Mutharika and the development partners as a consequence robbed Malawi of critical programmatic and budgetary support in 2005 and likely contributed to the president’s mistrust of the development community thereafter. When Joyce Banda entered office, she quickly repaired the government’s relationship with the donors. Her agreement to the IMF’s structural adjustment package meant that Malawi would receive increased financial support for cash transfer programmes. But Banda’s popularity was damaged in 2013 when she was unable to prevent an increase in maize prices, a misfortune for which the 2012-2013 donor package had made no provision (Said and Singini, 2014). In the future, Malawi’s development partners must account for the political implications of their actions, and not give consideration only to what makes the most sense technically or financially.

Botswana’s financial autonomy obviates the need for donor policy recommendations, though it does not obviate the utility of applying brand management principles to campaign strategy. An understanding of the brands that candidates project would no doubt abet the work of political strategists who are tasked with ensuring that what the candidate offers voters and what the voters seek in the candidate do in fact match. Tweneboah-Koduah *et al.* (2009) highlighted how a lack of brand management in Ghana presented potential new challenges for the parties in the 2008 election in Ghana. The authors argued that because NPP and NDC strategists had not treated their parties as firms might treat their consumer brands, the parties from a branding perspective had become “acutely *sick*” and created inadvertently “opportunity for the emergence of a *new* political brand.” Consideration for the ways in which Botswana’s candidates are portrayed in terms of policy priorities has important implications for a country in which ideas-based politics are very much becoming the norm.

Ultimately, this thesis served to highlight the importance of studying the recent behaviour of African political actors under conditions of electoral competition and to make initial forays into explaining the implications of this behaviour on election outcomes. As Malawi and Botswana reach the half-century mark following colonial rule, both countries have emerged into robust democracies yet continue to face grievous development challenges. It therefore becomes all the more critical for researchers to devote themselves to understanding the dialectical relationship between politics and welfare reform in these two countries. It is thus hoped that this study can be a foundation for future research that will shed additional light on this important subject.

## Works Cited

- Burchard, Stephanie. “You Have to Know Where to Look in Order to Find It: Competitiveness in Botswana’s Dominant Party System.” *Government and Opposition* 48, no. 01 (2013): 101–26. doi:10.1017/gov.2012.1.
- Cheeseman, Nicholas, and Robert Ford. “Ethnicity as a Political Cleavage.” In *The Micro-Foundations of Mass Politics in Africa*, 12–13, 2007.  
[http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Robert\\_Ford11/publication/241306316\\_ETHNICITY\\_AS\\_A\\_POLITICAL\\_CLEAVAGE/links/0c96053bfcab8228cc000000.pdf](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Robert_Ford11/publication/241306316_ETHNICITY_AS_A_POLITICAL_CLEAVAGE/links/0c96053bfcab8228cc000000.pdf).
- Devereux, Stephen, and Philip White. “Social Protection in Africa: Evidence, Politics and Rights.” *Poverty & Public Policy* 2, no. 3 (2010): 53–77. doi:10.2202/1944-

2858.1078.

- Elischer, Sebastian. *Political Parties in Africa: Ethnicity and Party Formation*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Kabandula, Abigail, and Seekings, Jeremy. "The Minister of Finance and the Limits of Donor Influence on Cash Transfer Programmes in Zambia, 2003-2011." *Unpublished Paper*, 2014.
- Lekorwe, Mogopodi. "Governance and Elections: Enhancing Local Democracy in Botswana." *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000): 23–35.
- Needham, Catherine. "Brands and Political Loyalty." *The Journal of Brand Management* 13, no. 3 (2006): 178–87.
- Niles, Kimberly. "Economic Adjustment and Targeted Social Spending: The Role of Political Institutions (Indonesia, Mexico and Ghana)." *Background Paper Prepared for The World Development Report 2001* (2000).  
[http://web.iaincirebon.ac.id/ebook/moon/PoliticalScience/NILES\\_POLINSTITUTION.PDF](http://web.iaincirebon.ac.id/ebook/moon/PoliticalScience/NILES_POLINSTITUTION.PDF).
- Poteete, Amy R. "Electoral Competition, Factionalism, and Persistent Party Dominance in Botswana." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 50, no. 01 (2012): 75–102.  
doi:10.1017/S0022278X11000619.
- Resnick, Danielle. "Opposition Parties and the Urban Poor in African Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* 45, no. 11 (2012): 1351–78.  
doi:10.1177/0010414012437166.
- Said, Jonathan, and Khwima Singini. "The Political Economy Determinants of Economic Growth in Malawi." BWPI, The University of Manchester, 2014.  
<http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/bwpbwppap/esid-040-14.htm>.
- Siachiwena, Hangala. "Regime Change and the Politics of Welfare Policy Reform in Zambia under the Patriotic Front Government (2011-2014)." unpublished paper, 2015.
- Svasand, Lars. "The Concept of Opposition and the Structure of Opposition in Malawi." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 51, no. 3 (2013): 306–25.
- Tweneboah-Koduah, E. Yaw, Akotia, Mathias, and Akotia, Charity S. "Political Party Brand and Consumer Choice in Ghana," 2009.  
[http://www.brandghana.org.gh/sites/default/files/publications/Political%20Party%20Brand%20and%20Consumer%20Choice%20in%20Ghana%20-%20Tweneboah-Koduah%20\(2009\).pdf](http://www.brandghana.org.gh/sites/default/files/publications/Political%20Party%20Brand%20and%20Consumer%20Choice%20in%20Ghana%20-%20Tweneboah-Koduah%20(2009).pdf).
- van de Walle, Nicolas. "Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 02 (2003): 297–321.  
doi:10.1017/S0022278X03004269.
- Weghorst, Keith R., and Staffan I. Lindberg. "What Drives the Swing Voter in Africa?"

*American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 3 (2013): 717–34.  
doi:10.1111/ajps.12022.

Young, Daniel J. “An Initial Look into Party Switching in Africa: Evidence from Malawi.”  
*Party Politics* 20, no. 1 (2014): 105–15.